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THE YOUTH GONE WILD GROWS UP

PETE AGNEW TELLS ALL

★ CLASSIC ★

ROCK

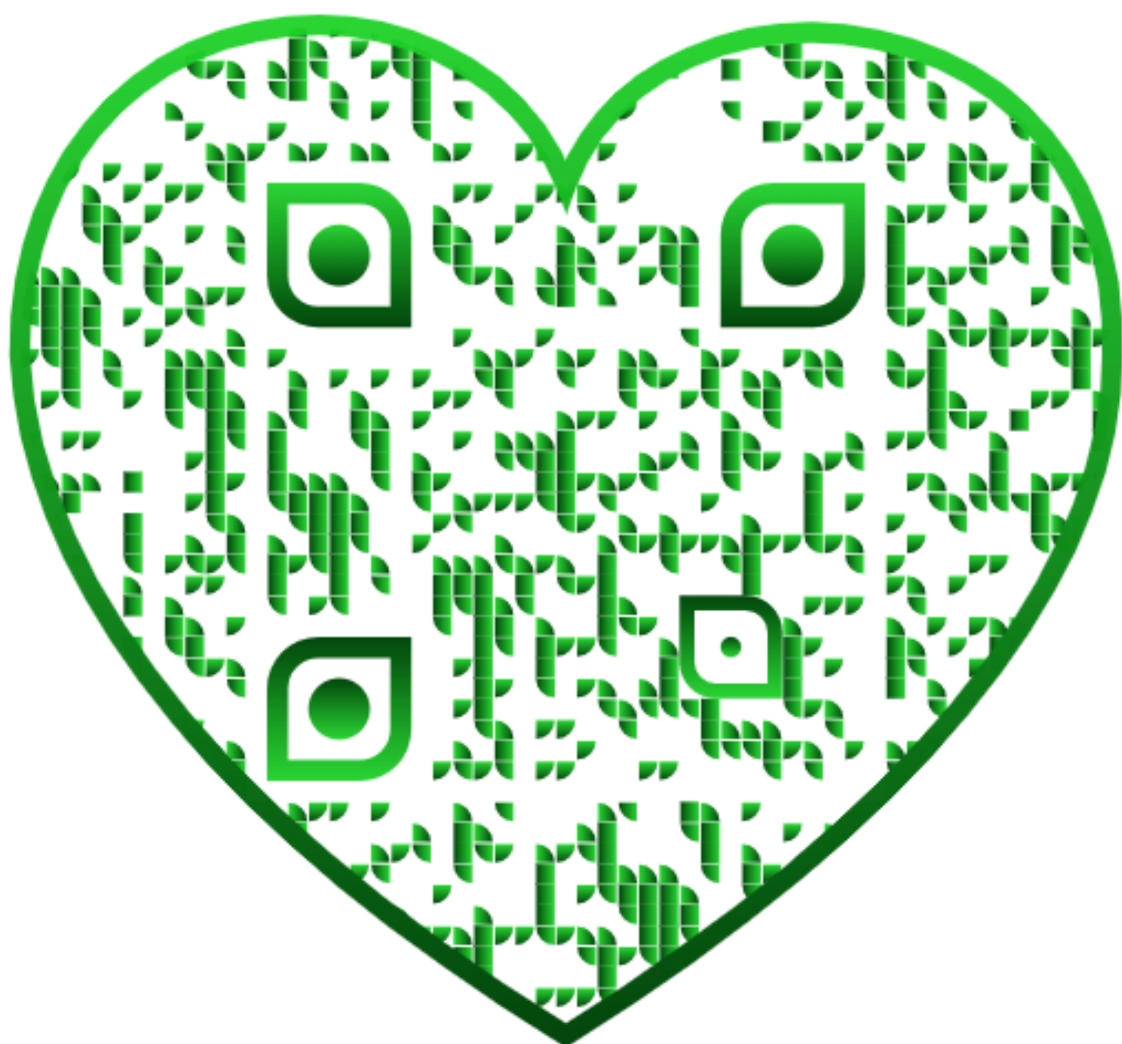


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"This blues album was a big outlet for me to be able to do something that I love to do"

ROSS HALEY

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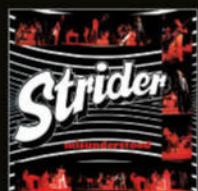


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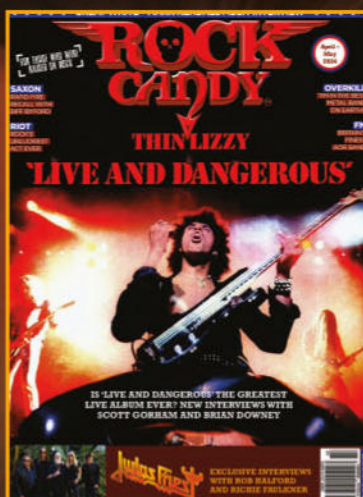
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SO WHAT'S INSIDE ISSUE 43?

- **THIN LIZZY** - Guitarist Scott Gorham and drummer Brian Downey on the enduring legacy of 'Live And Dangerous'
- **JUDAS PRIEST** - Passion, dedication, belief, and love
- **GREAT WHITE** - Mark Kendall mega-interview
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ad I compiled a bingo card of things that might happen in 2024 at the beginning of the year, I really don't think I'd have included Slash releasing a new album.

I mean, the fella's got a lot on his plate – a seemingly

endless Guns N' Roses tour (and possibly a much-rumoured new album from them), and another extensive 'rest of the world' tour with his other day job with Myles Kennedy & The Conspirators. I mean, when would he have had the time for anything else? What I certainly wouldn't have put on the list would have been a brand new album of (mostly) blues covers, packed with rock A-listers at the mic. Nostrodamus I am not... Slash tells us all about it, and how he coerced some of his famous pals into helping him (from p28).

I did mention this last month, but I'm going to do so again, as it's a pretty cool thing. Don't forget that if you're a subscriber (go to p82 to sort) you not only get the mag in your hand, but also now have access to our digital edition – and more than 100 back issues!

Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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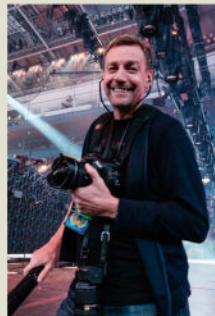
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This month's contributors



DAVID SINCLAIR

David was the rock and pop correspondent for *The Times* of London for 30 years, and has been a contributor to *Classic Rock* for many years. He fronts his band the David Sinclair Four, and has released six albums. This issue he welcomed back Robin Trower (p12), and talked to Slash for our cover story (p28), with both of whom he shares a lifelong love of the blues. Find out more at davidsinclairfour.com



KEVIN NIXON

Kevin is a long-time contributor to *Classic Rock*, and he has also worked extensively with our sister magazines *Metal Hammer* and *Prog*. This issue he photographed Pete Agnew for us at the Hard Rock Café in London (p62) and also shot the triple bill of Heep, Saxon and Priest (p102). When he is not in a photo pit he can often be found exploring and photographing disused railway tunnels, cathedrals and abandoned buildings.



NIALL DOHERTY

Niall is a music writer based on the Essex Riviera. He co-runs the music Substack letter *The New Cue* and also writes for *Music Week*, *FourFourTwo*, *Apple Music* and others. This issue he talked to Lenny Kravitz about his supernova career (p58), but unfortunately the interview took place before Lenny released a video of himself lifting weights while wearing leather trousers, so they didn't discuss that. Next time.



5150



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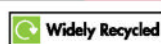
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“I WONDER WHAT PHIL MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT...”

After decades of secrecy, **Scott Gorham** reveals he's handy with a paintbrush and a pencil.

Scott Gorham launches his first ever art exhibition, in London on April 22. You were probably unaware that the Thin Lizzy and Black Star Riders guitarist likes to wield paintbrushes and pens as well as a Gibson Les Paul, probably because Gorham hid this ‘other’ talent under a bushel for decades, drawing in the secrecy of hotel rooms around the world, and without informing bandmates or even his wife of several decades, Christine. Indeed, Gorham insists that he would never have disclosed this artistic side but for the stubborn insistence of Mrs Gorham, who stumbled on a folder of his drawings at their home.

While discussing his art with *Classic Rock*, Gorham appears almost apologetic, at times close to embarrassment. “With a guitar around my neck you can throw me out on stage in front of a crowd of a hundred thousand, no problem,” he says solemnly. “But put me in a room with ten people looking at the art that I hid for forty years, I will turn into jelly.”

Gorham’s artworks were inspired variously by life on the road, getting sober, the state of the planet, and even the time that Phil Lynott took him to his first football match, a game between Lynott’s beloved Manchester United away to Newcastle United.

“The experience left an indelible stamp on me,” Gorham recalls of going to that game. “A few months later we were on tour in

Germany, and I went out and bought an art pad and some pens and drew this figure I called *The Fanatic* (see opposite page).

Back in his native California, just before flying to England in 1974 in the hope of joining Supertramp, 14-year-old Gorham took an art course. Apart from that he is entirely self-taught.

“The only reason I took that lesson was because the alternative was another semester of typing,” he says, laughing. “I knew I’d never want to work in an office, so I figured I’d try art.”

So how would Gorham describe his style?

[Long pause] “You know, I really haven’t even thought about styles,” he replies, before a smirk appears on his face. “All I can say is the way that I draw is *complicated*, so how about that?”

Having stepped away from Black Star Riders in 2021, Gorham continued to draw in an unused but suitably sunny and solitary room at home, concealing the designs under the bed.

“And then one day Christine was cleaning and found my folder. When she asked who had drawn them, I was hesitant to admit it was me. There was nobody else around to blame, my big secret was out.

“This was four years ago,” he continues. “Since then Christine chipped away, persuading me into letting it go [to the outside world]. Whenever she brought up the subject I would leave the room, I just didn’t want to know. But she finally talked me round.”

Three years ago, Gorham posted *The Fanatic* on social media to commemorate what would have been Phil Lynott’s birthday, and was deluged with requests for prints. However, the whole element of subterfuge is what makes this story so fascinating. Why keep things so secret for that long?

“In all the time I travelled with the guys in Thin Lizzy, nobody ever said *anything* about art,” Gorham replies. “I thought that if I started pulling this stuff out they’d razz me to death.

And if they ridiculed me, then I’d probably stop drawing, which I didn’t want to do, so I kept it as my thing. I suppose I do wonder what Phil might have thought.”

Did he also keep quiet about it because people tend to consider rock stars who become artists a bit of a cliché?

“Not really. Like I said, the absolute truth is that had I been laughed at it would have destroyed me. That’s why it means so much to hear that [Thin Lizzy cover artist] Jim Fitzpatrick likes what I’m doing. Jim and I have been friends for forty years, and I always loved it when he brought in the artwork that he’d drawn for each of the band’s albums. To have him say anything nice about my stuff is incredibly thrilling.”

Gorham’s artworks can be viewed at the Sanctum Hotel in Berwick Street in London’s Soho on April 22 from 7.30pm. Prints will also go on sale online at scottgorhamworld.com the following day.

As for what he does best, having been part of Black Star Riders’ 10th-anniversary tour, Gorham reveals that offers are on the table for another Thin Lizzy reunion tour.

“I’d like to put that band of pirates back together again,” he says with a chuckle. “Should it happen, I guess we’d be looking at next summer for that.”

In the meantime, don’t waste your time waiting for a debut solo album from the self-styled gunslinger from Glendale.

“No, no, no, no... I’m not that guy,” he exclaims, laughing. “I’m no singer and I’m not great with lyrics. I still play and I write songs, but a solo record? That ain’t gonna happen.” **DL**



“His work can be quite disturbing”

Thin Lizzy’s Jim Fitzpatrick on Scott Gorham’s art.

“Scott kept his art secret from me, too, and getting to see it was a very pleasant surprise,” says Jim Fitzpatrick, whose illustrations adorned the sleeves of Thin

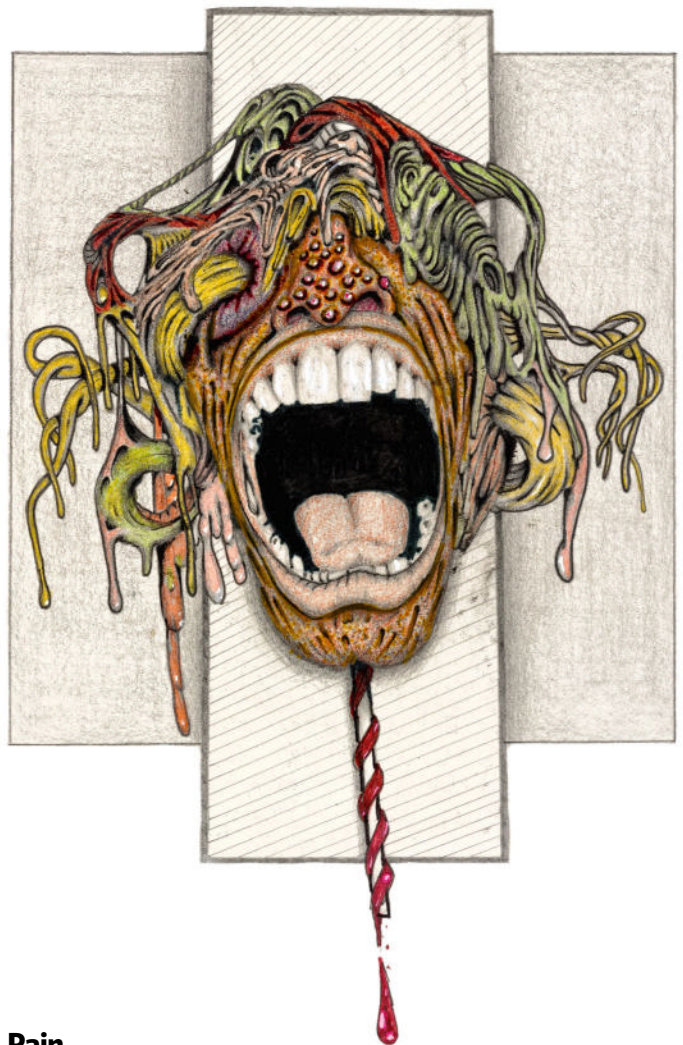
Lizzy’s albums *Vagabonds Of The Western World*, *Jailbreak* and *Black Rose*, among others. “Although Scott is an amazingly talented guitarist, I wasn’t expecting a great deal. He’s a rocker on stage, he’s magnetic, but that doesn’t mean he can paint. Ronnie Wood of the Rolling Stones is a great artist, but for rock stars that’s about as good as it gets.

“So when I saw the images I was gobsmacked. I still don’t think Scott believes that I like them, but I honestly do. He draws very well indeed. His work can be quite disturbing. *The Fanatic* is extraordinary, and *Pain* reminds me of Scott himself on stage. God alone knows what’s going through his mind when he draws.”



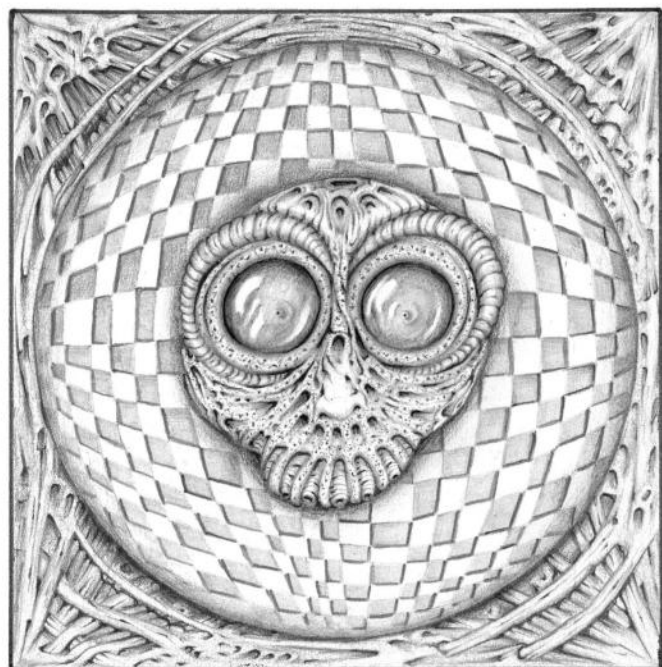
The Fanatic

"The Manchester United players had given us tickets to a game up at Newcastle. Within five minutes Manchester United scored. I think Phil was the only supporter of Manchester in the stadium, so that was quite scary. Then a second goal went in, and a third. Then number four, and scarves and hotdogs are being thrown onto the pitch. Newcastle fans around us are crying. Phil was very smart, in self-preservation he sat quietly in his seat. But as a follower of American sports I had never seen that level of support, so I drew *The Fanatic*, this guy who was totally beaten up and defeated. It isn't about Newcastle United but football fans in general."



Pain

"*Pain* is almost like a self-portrait. Look at the bones growing into my right eye. Back in the day I went through some real problems in the band [Thin Lizzy]. There was a lot of tension, and I got cluster headaches, which are like the big-ass granddaddy of the migraine. They would lay me out in a dark room and last for three or four hours. Then when the band broke up, Phil and I deciding that getting away from it all would save our lives, everything melted away."



Curiosity

"I believe that there are other civilisations other than ours here on Earth. We cannot be the only intelligent species in the universe. Without sounding like a kook, I'm pretty sure that over the centuries we have been visited [by aliens] a couple of times, maybe they are even looking after us. The figure in *Curiosity* has huge eyes because they're all-seeing and all-knowing."



The Missing Link

"I watched a documentary about the lineage of the human race. It made me imagine this archaeologist out in the desert, shovelling away, and he's exhausted and on the verge of giving up, when suddenly he's faced by this thing looking up at him from the dirt. 'My God, what's that?' And of course it's the missing link - finally."

RIP

Thank you...
and good night.

TM Stevens

July 28, 1951 – March 10, 2024

Thomas Michael Stevens, known professionally as TM Stevens, was a noted bass guitarist who collaborated with numerous artists working in a variety of genres, as well as working as a solo performer. Born in New York City, Stevens played with Steve Vai, James Brown, Tina Turner, Joe Cocker, The Pretenders, Billy Joel, Little Steven and his good friend Stevie Salas. The 72-year-old had been living with advanced dementia, and passed away peacefully in his sleep in a nursing home.

Paul Nelson

Died March 10, 2024

Having been hand-picked to join bluesman Johnny Winter's band in 2005, guitarist Paul Nelson went on to become Winter's producer, manager, longtime friend and saviour – he was credited for easing Winter off drugs, alcohol and smoking before Johnny's death in 2014 at the age of 70. Still a road dog at the time of his own passing, the Grammy-winning New Yorker died from a heart attack while he was on tour.

Brother Dege

June 8, 1967 – March 8, 2024

Grammy-nominated musician and songwriter Dege Legg, known professionally as Brother Dege, has passed away at the age of 56. The massively popular Lafayette artist is remembered for his distinctive blend of southern-swamp-psych-outlaw-rock and neo-blues, and also for his gritty memoir titled *Cablog: Diary Of A Cab Driver*. Dege's song *Too Old To Die Young* was used in Quentin Tarantino's Oscar-nominated 2012 film *Django Unchained*.

Jimmy Hastings,

May 12, 1938 – March 18, 2024

The Canterbury scene is mourning the loss of Jimmy Hastings, a saxophonist and flautist best known for his work with Caravan, Soft Machine, Hatfield And The North, Trapeze and Bryan Ferry. Hastings began his long music career in Humphrey Lyttelton's band. As part of that band he was a guest performer on Radiohead's 2001 album *Amnesiac*, playing on the track *Life In A Glasshouse*. Hastings was 85.

'Big' Mac Baker

Died March 15, 2024

Little is known of the loss of the former guitarist with Mammoth, the British rock

John Sinclair

October 2, 1941 – April 2, 2024



The poet, counterculture figure, political activist and manager of the MC5 has died of congestive heart failure. He was 82.

John Sinclair was forging a reputation as a poet when MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer requested guidance for the fast-emerging Detroit band sometimes credited with inventing punk rock.

"John and I sat up all night talking about everything and everybody," Kramer said in his autobiography *The Hard Stuff*. "John had the ability to articulate feelings that I only knew on a gut level."

Sinclair helped grow Detroit's Grande Ballroom into one of the best-known concert venues in the

Midwest, and played a part in launching the career of Iggy Pop. He was also a co-founder of the anti-racist socialist group the White Panther Party that was a counterpart to the Black Panthers.

The MC5 fired him as manager in 1969. That same year Sinclair was sentenced to 10 years in prison for possession of two joints.

With liberty restored in 1971, Sinclair campaigned to legalise marijuana. When that eventually happened in his home state in 2018, he was among the first in line to make a legal purchase, telling reporters: "To me, this is all for other people. I've been able to get weed every day since 1962. But I'm glad for the average person." **DL**

Eric Carmen

August 11, 1949 – March 2024



The former frontman with The Raspberries, who went on to have a string of solo single successes, has died at the age of 74. No cause of death has been announced.

Eric Carmen formed The Raspberries in his home town of Cleveland, Ohio in 1970. With their short hair, matching suits and Beatles-eque sound, the band ran counter to the prevailing hard-rock mentality of the Cleveland scene, but it worked: their second single, *Go All The Way*, made the US Top 5, and further Top 20 hits followed with *I Wanna Be With You* and *Overnight Sensation (Hit Record)*.

The Raspberries broke up in 1975, but Carmen hit big with his

first solo release, *All By Myself*. Over the next decade he enjoyed a string of single hits including *Never Gonna Fall In Love Again*, *Hungry Eyes* and *Make Me Lose Control*. The original Raspberries line-up reunited in 2004 for a handful of gigs.

The early band certainly left a big impression on the likes of Bruce Springsteen, Cheap Trick and Kiss. Kiss's Paul Stanley posted on social media: "[This is] terrible news. Although known to many for writing radio hits like *All By Myself* and others, Eric was a true rocker at heart. His voice had elements of McCartney and Steve Marriott. The Raspberries played shows with us, they were a killer band live and I loved their records." **FL/DL**

Chris Cross

July 14, 1952 – March 25, 2024



Chris Cross, a long-time bassist with Ultravox, has died at the age of 70. Ultravox colleague Midge Ure described Cross as "the glue that held the band together", adding: "You were the logic in the madness in our lives. It was great to know and grow with you. You are loved and missed, old friend."

Born as Chris Allen in Tottenham, North London, Cross studied art and psychology at art college in London, where he helped form Tiger Lilly along with John Foxx (then named Dennis Leigh), guitarist Steve Shears, drummer Warren Cann and keyboard player Billy Currie. Tiger Lilly renamed themselves Ultravox! in 1976, and

released three art-rock albums in the 70s: *Ultravox!*, *Ha!-Ha!-Ha!* and *Systems Of Romance*. Poor sales lead to Shears' sacking and Foxx's departure in 1979.

Bringing in former Slik and Rich Kids singer/guitarist Midge Ure, in the 80s the group reinvented itself and had Top-10 success with the albums *Vienna*, *Rage In Eden*, *Quartet* and *Lament*, and hit singles including *Vienna* and *Dancing With Tears In My Eyes*.

Cross left following 1986's *U-Vox* album, and remained largely out of the spotlight until he rejoined what is perceived as the classic line-up, alongside Ure, Currie and Cann in 2008. The band released a final studio album, *Brilliant*, in 2012. **JE**

Karl Wallinger

October 19, 1957 – March 10, 2024



Karl Wallinger, best known as the frontman and songwriter with World Party, has died of a stroke at his home in Hastings. He was 66.

Born in Prestatyn, Wales, Wallinger was educated at Charterhouse, the boarding school famously attended by the original five members of Genesis. (He later worked with Peter Gabriel on his Big Blue Ball project, although the two men weren't at Charterhouse at the same time.)

It was as keyboard player with The Waterboys that Wallinger first tasted success, playing on the 80s albums *A Pagan Place* and *This Is The Sea*, and helping to arrange the music on tracks such

as *The Whole Of The Moon*.

Chief Waterboy Mike Scott once commented that "having Karl in the studio was like having a one-man orchestra around. There might have been a *This Is The Sea* without him, but it wouldn't have been the same – or as good".

Wallinger left The Waterboys to form World Party. Their debut album *Private Revolution* ('86) was an unusual mix of soul and folk music, and the influence of Prince, Bob Dylan, The Beatles and the Beach Boys continued on 1990s critically acclaimed *Goodbye Jumbo*.

He also worked with Sinead O'Connor. But his biggest hit was *She's The One*, a UK No.1 hit for Robbie Williams in 1999. **SR**

band he was in along with by former Gillan bassist John McCoy, former Samson frontman Nicky Moore, and drummer Vinnie 'Tubby' Reed, whose combined weight tipped the scales at more than 1,200lbs (85 stones). "Mac was a great guy and an accomplished player," says McCoy. "Always a solid, calming voice in the chaotic madness that was Mammoth."

Gerry Conway

September 11, 1947 – March 29, 2024

The former drummer with Fairport Convention, Jethro Tull, Pentangle and others has died at the age of 76 following a period of illness. He had been suffering from motor neurone disease. Gerry Conway was born in King's Lynn, Norfolk. He became a staff musician at EMI before playing with British blues icon Alexis Korner. "What a lad, and what ingenuity and style," wrote singer-songwriter Cat Stevens. "May God grant him the beautiful reward of peace everlasting."

Jim Beard

August 26, 1960 – March 2, 2024

Pennsylvania native Jim Beard became the keyboard player with the reunited Mahavishnu Orchestra in 1985, before going on to join the bands of the guitarists John Schofield and Pat Metheny. Since 2018 Beard was a touring keyboard player for Steely Dan, and also performed with the Eagles on their Long Goodbye tour. Beard made a series of solo albums between 1990 and 2019, and taught at the Berklee College Of Music in Boston. He was 63 at the time of his death, following a sudden illness.

Steve Cheyne

October 11, 1956 – February 20, 2024

Sometimes referred to as "the quiet force behind Glasgow's music scene", Steve Cheyne was the owner of Berkeley 2 Studios, a rehearsal space used by Robert Plant and Iggy Pop as well as many local bands and artists. After the news of 66-year-old Cheyne's passing, peacefully in his sleep, Alex Kapranos of Franz Ferdinand commented: "Steve was a good guy, very supportive and with a fine, dry sense of humour. He'll be missed by us and huge number of Glaswegian musicians."

Pegi Cecconi

Died March 28, 2024

With a career that spanned almost five decades, Pegi Cecconi deserved to be described as a staple of the Canadian entertainment scene. A long-time management employee of Rush, the 70-year-old had been battling progressive supranuclear palsy. Rush frontman Geddy Lee posted on Instagram: "Pegi's laugh could be heard the moment she entered any venue. Thanks Peg, for 50 years of having our backs... wherever you're headed they ain't ready for ya!"

Mark Spiro

March 28, 1957 – March 28, 2024



Songwriter, recording artist and producer Spiro has died of lung cancer on his 67th birthday. As well as having a career as a solo artist, releasing a trio of albums that are celebrated by connoisseurs of AOR, the Seattle native supplied songs for Cheap Trick, John Waite, Heart, Giant, Mr. Big, REO Speedwagon and more.

After learning his craft in Germany working with Laura Branigan, Pia Zadora and David Hasselhoff, Spiro made the big time after co-writing *Mighty Wings* for Cheap Trick, which appeared on the huge-selling soundtrack to the film *Top Gun*.

Spiro released three unforgettable solo albums – *Now Is Then*, *Then is*

Now, *Devotion* and *The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of* – between '96 and '99, but it was in the hands of other artists that his talents found maximum traction.

Spiro had several hits with the melodic rock supergroup Bad English formed by ex-Bad English singer John Waite and former Journey guitarist Neal Schon, including *Forget Me Not*, *Heaven Is A 4 Letter Word* and *Straight To Your Heart*. For Giant he wrote the majestic power ballad *I'll See You In My Dreams*.

John Waite Tweeted: "[It's] hard to grasp Mark Spiro is gone. He was a friend of mine. A genuine guy. We shared some great times and wrote a couple of classics together." **DL**

Vince Power

April 29, 1947 – 9 March 9, 2024



Promoter and nighttime industry kingpin Vince Power has died at the age of 76. The Irishman ran some of Britain's top venues and festivals, and has been credited with revolutionising live music. In 2006 he was awarded a CBE for services to the music industry.

John Vincent Power was born in Waterford and moved to London at the age of 15. After starting out as a shop assistant, he opened his first venue, the Mean Fiddler, in North London in 1982, which welcomed artists including Johnny Cash, Paul McCartney and Van Morrison.

Such was its success that Power's company, the Mean Fiddler Group, began expanding, purchasing other

London venues including the Astoria in Charing Cross Road, Highbury's Garage, the Clapham Grand and the Jazz Café in Camden.

Branching out into festivals he ran The Phoenix and the Fleadh, before taking over Reading (and later its sister event in Leeds) and had a stake in Glastonbury.

But things weren't always rosy, and at a low point he said: "Show me a person who hasn't had a bad run, but I had twenty-seven venues and seven festivals at one point."

Singer Imelda May said: "I adored Vince. He took a chance on me at the start of my career when I needed it most. He was so important to Irish culture. He'll be greatly missed." **DL**

Erik Grönwall Quits Skid Row

Lzzy Hale to front the band temporarily.

With Erik Grönwall having quit Skid Row, Halestorm singer Lzzy Hale has agreed to help out the US band until they appoint what will be their seventh lead vocalist.

Grönwall, who joined Skid Row in 2022, six months after completing treatment for leukaemia, was keen to stress that his decision to leave was taken purely on health grounds, and with no animosity.

"I love Skid Row, I have nothing but respect for the guys in the band but I love and respect my health more," the Swede said in a statement. "I need to allow myself more time to recover, which I can't do as the lead singer of Skid Row."

In agreeing to stand in for four US shows, Hale enthused. "I'm stepping in for a few dates as the lead singer of Skid Row! What an honour to call them my friends and a privilege to share the stage with them!"

Addressing the possibility of taking on the role full-time by balancing out her commitments to Halestorm, she said: "You never know." **DL**



Lzzy Hale: Skidding along for four shows.

Lars To Join Spinal Tap

Ulrich and the Chilis' Chad Smith sign up for film sequel.

Lars Ulrich and Chad Smith will both make cameo appearances in the sequel to the seminal rockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap*, which has begun filming in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Ulrich and Smith, the drummers with Metallica and the Red Hot Chili Peppers respectively, join a cast of musicians that includes Elton John, Paul McCartney and country singer Garth Brooks.

Four decades after the original movie, the long-anticipated follow-up is again directed by Rob Reiner, who reprises his role as filmmaker 'Marty' DiBergi, with Christopher Guest portraying vocalist/guitarist Nigel Tufnel, Michael McKean as lead guitarist David St Hubbins, and Harry Shearer as bassist Derek Smalls.

No release date has been set, although it has been speculated that it might premiere in early 2025. Its storyline revolves around a final concert to honour a late band manager – presumably the cricket bat-wielding Ian Faith, played by Tony Hendra, who passed away in 2021. **DL**



NEWS

Glenn Hughes has completed the writing of a new solo album, which will be his first since *Resonate* in 2016. Although currently busy with Black Country Communion and his ongoing 50th-anniversary tour for Deep Purple's *Burn* album, the bassist/vocalist will record the songs in June for release in 2025.

With *Anthrax* bassist Frank Bello sitting out the band's April and May shows "due to personal reasons", original member Dan Lilker will deputise on a series of US and South American dates.

The *Crown* pub in Birmingham, dubbed "the birthplace of heavy metal" and the venue for the very first Black Sabbath gig, has been given special historical status and saved from possible demolition. Then called Earth, Sabbath made their live debut there in 1968.

Lynyrd Skynyrd guitarist **Rickey Medlocke** says the band have "a ton of material" that could potentially be released. Guitarist Gary Rossington, Skynyrd's last original member, who died in 2023, was involved in the writing of many of them, some with outside contributors.



Some of **Lemmy's** ashes are to be "enshrined" at his favourite watering hole, the Rainbow Bar And Grill in West Hollywood. An urn containing more of his ashes will be on display at this summer's Bloodstock Festival. The Motörhead frontman [pictured] died in December 2015, aged 70.



WELCOME BACK

Robin Trower

To coincide with the reissue of his finest album, a rock classic, the guitar great plays six shows in May.

Robin Trower's titanic presence as an English guitar hero bestriding the US arena-rock circuit in the 1970s has given way to a more modest, homegrown profile in recent times. But he is never far from a recording studio, with a bunch of new songs to hand. His latest album, *Joyful Sky*, featuring the American singer Sari Schorr, recently topped the *Billboard* Blues Albums chart. Having not played live for six years, he plays a short run of UK dates in May.

What's kept you away for so long?

Well covid came in, and that put the mockers on it, really. Thing is, when you get to my age [79] you've got to be really careful with your health. There's not really a great demand in the UK anyway. But I had to cancel a big US tour.

What prompted your return, with the six shows you're doing in March?

I did this in-concert video with Sari Schorr to promote our *Joyful Sky* album, and I enjoyed it so much, playing with the band again, I started thinking: "Okay, I'll chance it. We'll do a bit of touring."

Will Sari be joining you for these dates?

No. This will just be me doing my thing with Richard [Watts, vocals/bass] and Chris [Taggart, drums]. Sari was a one-off thing. It was a great project and a lot of fun to do, but I needed to get back home.

What will the set-list look like?

Presumably you'll do something from your best-known album *Bridge Of Sighs*? I'm concentrating on doing quite a bit of stuff that I've never played live from *No More Worlds To Conquer* [2022]. Also a couple of songs that are going to be on the next album. So it's a lot of new stuff, which will give it a bit of fizz. But I can't do a show

without doing some tracks from *Bridge Of Sighs*. They're the most popular songs and I still love them.

History has decided that the *Bridge Of Sighs* album is your masterwork. Do you agree? [Laughs] Well it's certainly my most well-received, most popular, biggest-selling album. But I tend to think of my best work in terms of tracks rather than albums. There's tracks here and there on different albums which I'm most proud of.

Such as?

Somebody Calling, off *In City Dreams* [1977], and *Little Girl* from the same album which I loved for Jimmy's [Dewar] vocal. Fantastic. I'd put *I'll Be Moving On* with Sari as one of my favourite all-time tracks.

What do you do to unwind?

I watch football, which is my favourite pastime apart from playing the guitar. I have a soft spot for Chelsea because I was a big Frank Lampard fan, and for Spurs because I'm a Harry Kane fan.

What is life on the road like when you're seventy-nine?

I'm going to find out, aren't I? The break has been great because I've been able to concentrate a lot more on writing. I did the Sari thing, I've just finished my next album, and I've also got a load of tracks for another album after that. So all that time was well spent. But now I'm ready to go out and have some fun. Playing live – there's nothing like it.

So this is just the beginning?

Yes. We're looking at doing the US in the autumn. **DS**

Robin Trower tours the UK from May 27 to 31. Bridge Of Sighs [50th Anniversary Edition] is out on May 17 via Chrysalis.



★ HIGH HOPES

Silveroller

“We’re going to that original well where rock’n’roll came from. There’s not many bells and whistles.”

Meet the blues rockers taking inspiration from the originals and keeping things raw and simple.

Silveroller aren’t here to start a revolution. The UK-based Gen-Z blues rockers are a proudly traditional band, with a bone-deep appreciation for “rock’n’roll in its purest form”. At the heart of their sound is a need for simplicity; a back-to-basics, no-frills approach that’s not a rehash of the past, but an extension of it.

“It’s not a maths equation, it’s rock’n’roll,” says frontman Jonnie Hodson, talking about Silveroller’s new EP *At Dawn*, a patchouli-spiced, groove-flushed feast of feverish blues rock, soaked in whisky at its edges.

Blues pioneers such as Muddy Waters, Freddie King and Albert Collins, as well as Led Zeppelin, are echoed within Silveroller’s folksy stylings and soulful melodies. “We’re going to that original well where rock’n’roll came from,” Hodson explains. “There’s not many bells and whistles; it’s raw.” They’re also strong advocates of recording live in the studio, where trapping bum notes is all part of the magic. “What made Johnny Cash as rock’n’roll as AC/DC or Black Sabbath was the attitude and rawness,” adds guitarist Aaron Keylock. “It’s capturing that and not losing it.”

Despite only being in their mid-20s, Silveroller are not new to the scene. In 2017 Keylock appeared in *Classic Rock* as a solo

artist. Not satisfied with that centre-stage role, he sought out a band. “Growing up, I wanted what Tom Petty had [with The Heartbreakers],” he says. “I wanted that brother.”

After an unforgettable first meeting with Hodson at one of his own gigs, the stars began to align. They later met up to jam. Now, Keylock compares their brotherhood to “the whole Jagger/Richards thing”. The band is filled out by players from all over the country, including drummer Joe Major, organist Ross Munro and bass player Jake James Cornes.

While Hodson comes from Liverpool and Keylock from Oxford, distance has never hindered their determination to make music. “We are a no-fixed-abode band,” Keylock says. “We just move the circus wherever it needs to go and set up camp.”

Although they rarely practise, when they do get together the band of brothers are so tightly knit that they even share clothes. “There’s five guys and probably four pairs of jeans between us,” Keylock admits.

Looking ahead, Hodson hopes that one day they’ll perform in Chicago, the musical wellspring of their heroes. In the meantime, they’re enjoying the overwhelming love from fans, some of whom have pegged them as the UK’s answer to Greta Van Fleet. “Since the dawn of rock’n’roll, it’s been a transatlantic conversation between us and the US,” Hodson says, “and we haven’t sent anything back yet. We’re the UK’s reply to Greta Van Fleet”. **LS**

At Dawn is out now, released independently.

FOR FANS OF...

BAD CO

“We’re as influenced by Muddy Waters, Freddie King and all the blues/soul guys as we are by Rival Sons, Led Zeppelin, Humble Pie and the Faces,” the band say of their rich, retro palette of inspirations. “We wanted that raw feel of Bad Company’s first album, and the Rolling Stones’ *Exile On Main St* was also a big influence.”



NEWS

Jeff Lynne's **Electric Light Orchestra** have announced 27 North American dates between August 24 and October 25 on what will be their farewell tour. As yet there is no news of any UK shows.

Stand Together, a benefit concert for **Matt Long**, the guitarist and vocalist with UK blues band Catfish who has been diagnosed with an aggressive cancer of the liver and stomach, takes place at The Stables in Wavendon, Milton Keynes on June 30. Among those set to appear are Kris Barras, Chantel McGregor, When Rivers Meet, Brave Rival and The Cinelli Brothers.

Rammstein are being sued by the French group Ninja Cyborg, who claim that the German industrial-metal giants' track *Deutschland* plagiarises Ninja Cyborg's track *The Sunny Road*. The case is due to be heard in September.

A deluxe edition of 1994's *Talk*, the third and final **Yes** album from the line-up that included guitarist Trevor Rabin, is released on May 24 via Spirit Of Unicorn Music. It has been digitally remastered and now comes as a four-disc set.



Kiss (pictured) have sold the rights to their recording royalties and trademarks, including the band's logo and make-up designs, for \$300 million to the Swedish company that financed ABBA's hologram show, *Voyage*, in London. No prizes for guessing what's in the pipeline.



LIGHTSHINE

Feeling, Trefiton Records, Germany, 1976. £750.



Lightshine were formed by five students in Emmerich, Germany in 1974. Their sound was perhaps considered too out of date for 1976 (the album sounds like it

could have been recorded at least several years earlier), so *Feeling* was released on the small independent label Trefiton.

It's an album of varied vibes, yet the five tracks somehow fit together as one piece. Perhaps this is down the minimal yet satisfactory production. One obvious aspect of the album's appeal to collectors is the piercing fuzz-tone of guitarists Joe Staacke and Ulli Strobel, which are noticeable right from opening track *Sword In The Sky*. *Lory*, with a bass line reminiscent of the *Inspector Gadget* theme, progresses into a Wishbone Ash style twin-guitar workout with jazzy vibes.

The two standout tracks on the album are the 11-minute *Nightmare* and the 13-minute *King And Queen*. Both are

'The fuzzy guitars add a nice psychedelic touch.'

experimental suites, the former a mellow, Floydian-type journey through a dark dream, complete with 70s *Dr Who*-like synthesiser and vocal effects. *King And Queen* is equally atmospheric, although generally more chilled, with the fuzzy guitars adding a nice psychedelic touch, and the occasional faster tempo changes and manic screaming work as a dramatic contrast to the spaced-out bliss. The darker, trippier title track closes the album.

The album sits comfortably alongside lesser-known krautrock gems by artists such as Out Of Focus, My Solid Ground and others. Their DIY approach certainly kept them out of the big league, but also displayed a sincerity in their sound. **LD**



WELCOME BACK

The Dandy Warhols

James Bond, Black Sabbath, Slash, white and pink noise? All things that have inspired the new Dandys.

The day after a "rager" playback party in NYC for their heavy, darkly twisty new album *Rockmaker*, *Classic Rock* caught up with Dandy Warhols frontman/guitarist Courtney Taylor-Taylor in Montreal at the start of a Canadian tour.

"We've immersed ourselves in confit duck and profiteroles here," he says, noting his gourmand proclivities before discussing the Portland alt.rockers' twelfth album in a 30-year career.

Rockmaker sounds cheery from the start with *Doomsday Bells*.

We had a rough couple of years in the US with this cult leader of a president, a caustic and nasty-mouthed man, whipping up hate. Then we end up with Putin as an insane dictator. The last album [*Tafelmuzik*]

Means More When You're Alone] had no songs on it, it was a lockdown soundtrack to a nine-course dinner party. This one is songs, asking: "Why are the stupid people winning, dictating what everybody does?" Except for *I Will Never Stop Loving You*, a true dark and honest love song, a duet with Debbie Harry.

Your other guests include Frank Black, and, somewhat more surprisingly, Slash. How did he come to be involved?

I was friends with Duff McKagan's wife before they met. They started dating and we'd run into [GN'R] over the decades. When the track *I'd Like To Help You With Your Problem* was nearly finished, Peter [Holmström, guitars, keys] and I realised we didn't have the chops for what we needed. Slash's style is probably the last of that Vietnam War-era, LSD, wah-wah sound. He heard the song and thought it was fucking awesome. When his part came back it was even better than we expected, really deep and cool.

What was the MO for the rest of *Rockmaker's* sound?

Every song had to start with a metal riff, accompanied by shit-tonnes of noise – we're all people who like random noise elements, a lot of white and pink noise. Guitar riffs are a great place for us to start, and then they all wander off – one goes James Bond, one goes Sabbath, whatever. I did a lot of extemporaneous playing, see what it unlocked in me. Then we applied some craft and artistry later.

Always experimenting, taking risks...

We experiment and try new things all the time. That's why we don't get any better [laughs]. But that's the nature of experimentation. I got to spend a lot of time in my studio, and his

studio, with David Bowie, and that was his thing, always looking over the fence, going: "That sounds amazing. How can I do that." That means real artists don't have a lot of consistency with hit songs; but you're an inventor, and you don't go from inventing Velcro to inventing the French press. It's not success after success.

The track *Alcohol And Cocaine-marijuananicotine* is very *Queens Of The Stone Age*.

You mean like their track *Feel Good Hit Of The Summer*? That wasn't big in the US so we never heard it. We thought: "Why not make a track about our favourite drugs?" I'm not comfortable with harder stuff any more, so we went for 'natural high'. But then the first time I had a twenty-year-old bottle of claret I thought: "This is incredible. Why did I waste all that money on ecstasy?" **JK**

Rockmaker is out now via Sunset Boulevard Records.



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JP



“We got an email from Metallica saying they loved it [their cover of *Enter Sandman*].”

The Warning

Keep Me Fed is out on June 28 via Lava/Republic Records.

Eagles

Life In The Fast Lane

A song built on a riff that guitarist Joe Walsh came up with, its title was what it was like being in the Eagles at that time.

Words: **Mick Wall**

By the summer of 1976, when the Eagles were making their *Hotel California* album, they were already so far over the rainbow they were shitting pots of gold. When co-founding member and country music missionary Bernie Leadon stormed off, taking his banjo with him after yet another clash over the band's "direction", the Eagles stopped masquerading as wholesome weed-and-wine minstrels from Laurel Canyon. They were now playing what singer/guitarist Glenn Frey called "satanic country rock".

Frey, a James Dean-worshipping Motown devotee from Detroit, had arrived in LA in 1969 playing Chuck Berry covers. For Frey, as with his co-songwriting compadre Don Henley, a lantern-jawed Texan not much taken with fucking around, the country thing was merely a ticket to ride; just what happened to be happening where the Eagles hatched. If they had formed in London instead of LA, they would have been a glam-rock band, no beards or double-denim allowed.

Indeed, Frey might have been more comfortable – musically, a least – in a glam-rock band. He liked to throw cigarettes into the air and catch them in his mouth – a trick he stole from James Dean. He drew "parallels between rock'n'roll and being an outlaw", adding: "I feel like I'm breaking a law all the time."

Similarly, Henley was less concerned with country music as he was with fame and fortune. He liked soul music, and appreciated country, but that wasn't what fuelled the success of the Eagles. It was the sheer force of personality of Frey and Henley. Glenn and Don. And their desire to be considered in the same 70s category as giants the Rolling Stones and Led Zep.

All of which would be evoked on *Life In The Fast Lane*, the track the Eagles built around a powerful boogie riff from Leadon's replacement, Joe Walsh.

Goodbye folksy banjos and diddly fiddles; hello far-out rock and get-down funk.

Already famous for being in the James Gang and for his monumental 1973 solo hit *Rocky Mountain Way*, 28-year-old Walsh helped turn the Eagles into an authentic rock band. He was the life of the Eagles' party, according to their other main guitarist, Don Felder, even on those days when they were "hungover or feeling sick with sinus infections from bad blow out of Cuba".

Walsh liked take a chainsaw with him when he was on the road, to remove doors and turn hotel suites into one huge party room. He liked doing 'hog rails': thick white lines of cocaine, smoothed out with man-sized screwdrivers – quadruple vodka and fresh-squeezed orange juice.

He liked abandoning rental cars in the

most unlikely spots, leaving vapour trails of fun and destruction in his wake; all of the energy he can no longer burn by going crazy on stage finding an outlet away from it. An exit wound.

Walsh liked water fights and pranks with glue guns. He liked what one girlfriend

calls his "kink scenes" – soft-core bondage, consenting and fun when you've been up for five days straight and are still trying to stay high. "Monsterring," Walsh called it.

When in rehearsal one day Walsh came up with the swaggering riff to what was to become *Life In The Fast Lane*, Henley exclaimed: "What in the hell is that? We've got to figure out some way to make a song out of that!"

Frey moulded it into an old R&B staple – the 'one chord' song – and came up with the perfect title, from a conversation he'd had with a drug dealer nicknamed The Count. They'd been in a car merging onto an LA freeway, when the Count hit the gas, much to Glenn's alarm. "What do you mean slow down?" the Count yelled. "This is life in the fast lane..."

Years later, Felder would admit: "I could

Living in the fast lane in the 70s: (l to r) Joe Walsh, Glenn Frey, Don Henley, Randy Meisner, Don Felder.



DEATH IN THE FAST LANE

The Eagles broke up at the end of their 1980 US tour after a huge bust-up on stage. As they were playing the sweetly soulful *Best Of My Love*, Glenn Frey sidled up to Don Felder and said in his ear: "Fuck you. When we get off this stage, I'm kicking your ass!"

Felder, who had been drinking and had had about as much of this shit as he could stand, hissed back. "Only three more songs till I kick your ass, pal. Get ready."

The final number of the night before the encores was *Life In The Fast Lane*. Somehow they managed to churn through the encores without attacking each other. The gig ended, and most of the band split for the limos at the backstage door. Except Frey. He watched as Felder grabbed an old guitar and smashed it against a wall.

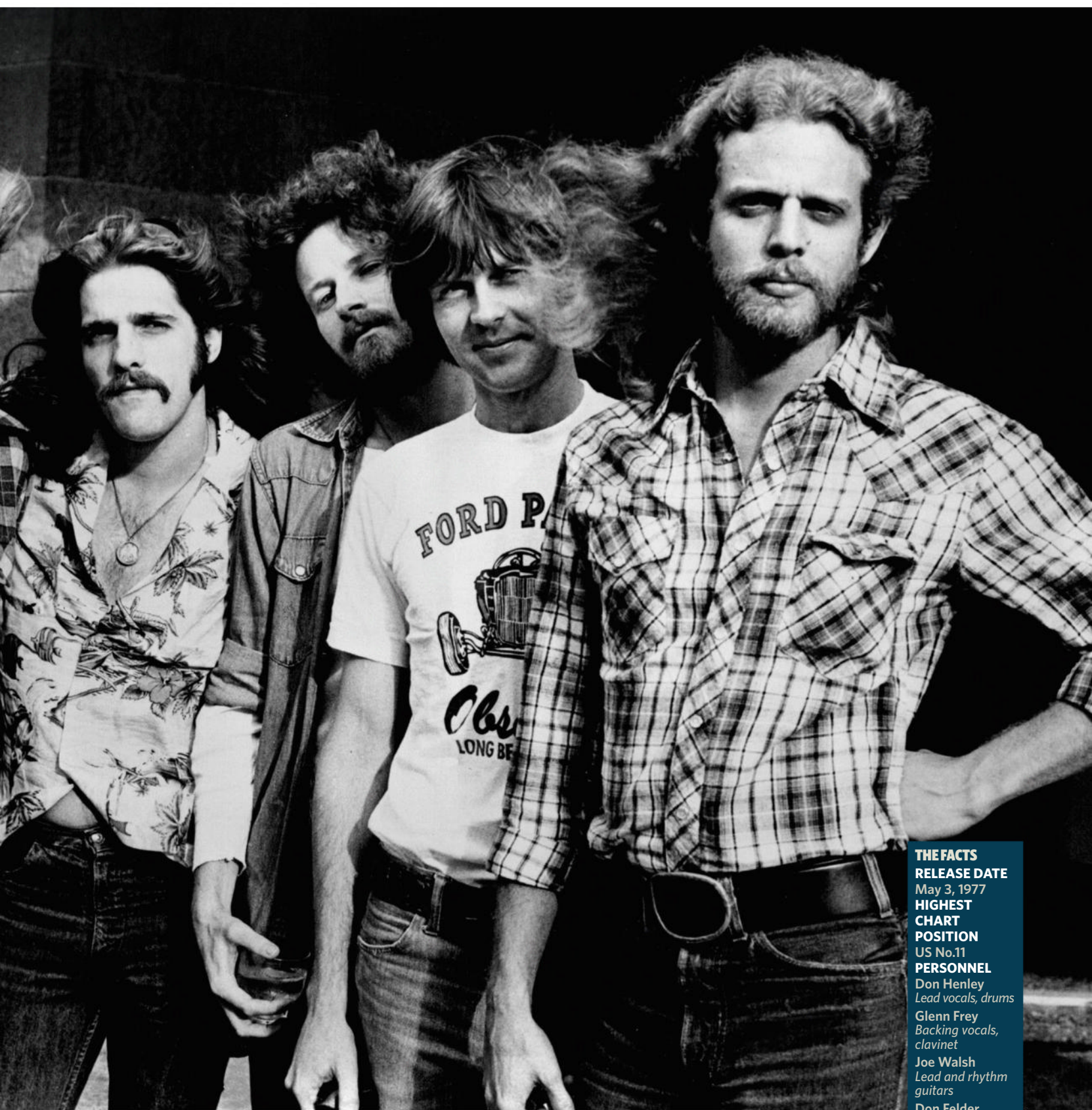
Frey glared at Felder and said. "Typical of you to smash your cheapest guitar."

Felder thought about it, then strode to his limo before anything else could happen.

It really was over for the Eagles now.

hardly listen to that song when we were recording it, because I was getting high a lot at the time and the song made me ill." He added: "We were trying to paint a picture that cocaine wasn't that great. It turns on you." The fans heard it differently, and decided it was an anthem.

"As far as who came up with the lyric," explained Felder. "Glenn came up with one half of it and I came up with the other. We were always finishing each other's



MAIN: TREVOR JAMES ROBERT DALLEY/GETTY

sentences; we had a kind of telepathy.”

The lyrics contained some of the Eagles’ most biting couplets: ‘*There were lines on the mirror, lines on her face/She pretended not to notice, she was caught up in the race...*’

When the *Hotel California* album was finally released in December 1976, critical focus was understandably on the title track, which *Rolling Stone* felt showcased “both the best and worst tendencies of Los Angeles-situated rock”, adding that

the lyrics to *Life In The Fast Lane* “present a convincing and unflattering portrait of the milieu itself”.

On the subsequent tour, when the Eagles hit Chicago Walsh invited his good buddies John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd over to his suite at the Astor Towers hotel, where the three amigos set about destroying the place – which turned out to be the owner’s private apartment.

“We had to check out with a lawyer and

a construction foreman,” Walsh recalled. “This was a different age. We could do anything we wanted, so we did.”

Or as Don Henley put it: “Well, Joe was and is his own man. He’s always been an independent entity, even as a member of the group.”

Life in the fast lane indeed. **i**

Eagles’ To The Limit: The Essential Collection is out now via Rhino.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE

May 3, 1977

HIGHEST

CHART

POSITION

US No.11

PERSONNEL

Don Henley
Lead vocals, drums

Glenn Frey
Backing vocals,
clavinet

Joe Walsh
Lead and rhythm
guitars

Don Felder
Lead and rhythm
guitars

Randy Meisner
Bass and backing
vocals

WRITTEN BY

Joe Walsh,
Glenn Frey,
Don Henley

PRODUCED BY

Bill Szymczyk

LABEL

Asylum

Kerry King

The Slayer guitarist on his old band, his new band, his new solo album, humanity's failure, and the pressure of going solo.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Kerry King wasted no time in getting back on the horse after his band, thrash metal juggernauts Slayer, called it a day in 2019. "I had a few months off, and that was enough for me," says the guitarist. "I've had a long career, and I'm a lot closer to the tail end of it, so any time wasted is lost time."

The fruit of his recent labours is his vicious debut solo album *From Hell I Rise*, a record that won't disappoint Slayer fans. That band's unexpected reunion is off-limits today – a publicist sits in on our conversation to make sure – but King still has plenty to say about religion, politics and his late bandmate Jeff Hanneman.

Was there any grand plan behind the solo album, or is this just what comes out every time you pick up a guitar?

Every time you go in with an agenda, nine times out of ten you're not going to achieve it. For me it's just sitting down with a guitar and a phone to record it on.

It's instantly recognisable as an album by the guitarist from Slayer. Was it tempting to step out of that comfort zone and make, say, a prog-metal record or pull a *Load/Reload*-style left turn?

No. I'm a fan of metal, and luckily I get to write my own. And it just so happens that I'm good at this. If there was ever a point in time to try that, this would have been it, but I don't have that desire.

Did you get people you hadn't heard from in years saying: "Hey, I hear there's a vacancy in your band..."

Surprisingly, very few. I think people figured I had a master plan from day one. Which I kind of did, but it wasn't chipped in stone. And I thought there'd be offers to fill in [with other bands], but that phone never rang, so I worked on my stuff.

You could have had your pick of pretty much any modern metal singer. Why did you go with Death Angel's Mark Osegueda.

We've been friends for decades, but we got tighter in the last five or six years. He was the only one we tried out. I didn't want Death Angel Mark, I wanted to build him up in a way that no one's ever heard him. Everybody I picked was good friends. Paul [Bostaph, drummer] was in Slayer, Phil [Demme, guitarist] had left Machine Head, Hellyeah [bassist Kyle Sanders's former band] had broken up. Everybody needed work, so it was out of necessity.

Were you ever tempted to sing? What's your singing voice like?

I have conviction, but I don't have great pipes. If it had have worked out to where I had to be the singer, I could have done it. But I can't sing and play either, so that would have been a big problem. I did do scratch [rough] vocals [on the demos], so if Mark had said: "Why don't we both sing this part," I might have said: "Yeah, let's do it." It would have been two pissed off, angry guys fucking screaming away.

You're fifty-nine. What have you still got to be pissed off at? Are you just the angry guy shaking his fist at the sky?

I'm definitely not that guy [laughs]. I believe humanity is just

a failure. Humanity is just waiting to end humanity by whatever idiotic fuck-up we do. The world's a fucked up place. That's why there's no shortage of things for me to write about.

The song *Toxic* is about bad government and political hypocrisy. What or who inspired it?

Toxic was written right after the Roe vs Wade decision went down in America [the controversial ruling to overturn US abortion laws]. Every Supreme Court justice Trump appointed lied to get the job. I can't understand how that happened. I can't understand how the American people are okay with that. Trump divided the country, and it's still divided. I don't know what needs to happen to make that change. It's certainly not going to be the 2024 election, because nobody cares about either one of those candidates.

The songs *Where I Reign* and *From Hell I Rise* take aim at religion. Do you think some priests will hear them and go: "Hey, you know what, Kerry's right, religion's a crock of shit?"

Ha! That would be a great day. I could go: "I told you!" But it would be a horrible day too, cos I'd lose half of what I write about.

You've said you changed the lyrics to a couple of songs because of the war in Ukraine. Why?

One song was *Two Fists*, which had a war reference that I changed the perspective on. *Trophies Of The Tyrant* might have got tweaked a little bit too. That song is kind of about the Ukrainian war anyway – they didn't ask to be invaded by some lunatic. And the Russian people are being lied to about what's happening in the Ukraine. It's a horrible situation.

You and late Slayer guitarist Jeff Hanneman were one of metal's all-time greatest guitar teams. When you're writing a song, do you ever think: "What would Jeff think of this?"

I did think of that when I was doing this record. And I thought to myself: "Jeff would fucking love this album – there's plenty of anti-religious stuff on there, there's plenty of war stuff, there's plenty of hate." He would have dug it.

It's your name above the marquee this time – there's no sharing the blame if it goes wrong. Does that add pressure?

I never wanted my last name attached to this. But every time we came up with a name, we'd find out there was a trademark issue. Naming a band in this day and age is fucking difficult. They were getting ready to announce the festivals shows we're doing, so we went with my name. I've only had the burden for a few months, so let's see.

When Slayer started out, you were in competition with Metallica and Megadeth. Who is Kerry King in competition with now?

I guess it's Slayer, because that's my career. People always expect you to fail, no matter who you are. It's up to me to either be consistent with or beat what I've done in the past. 🍌

From Hell I Rise is out on May 17 via Reigning Phoenix Music.

A full-page photograph of Kerry King, a member of the band Megadeth. He is bald, has a very long, dark beard, and is wearing dark sunglasses. He is dressed in a black t-shirt and a studded leather vest. He is holding a black electric guitar with a pointed body. The background is a dimly lit room with various pieces of equipment and cables visible.

Kerry King: plenty of things to be angry about and write about.

“It’s up to me to either be consistent with or beat what I’ve done in the past.”



Troy Redfern

He was raised on a farm; he finds the blues “super-limiting”; he’s a big Frank Zappa fan; you can dance to his new album...

Interview: **Polly Glass**

Troy Redfern is a blues rocker with a few twists. Recent success has planted him squarely in the blues world (he was nominated for Contemporary Artist Of The Year at the latest UK Blues Awards), but at heart he’s an eclectic soul, with roots that span Van Halen, W.A.S.P, Frank Zappa and Mississippi Fred McDowell. Not that he’s interested in mimicking anyone. “Since I was a kid I didn’t really learn other people’s music,” 50-year-old Redfern says. “I was always interested in writing stuff. I get that people are trying to keep the [blues] tradition alive, but to me it feels super-limiting.”

Accordingly, his new record, *Invocation*, is a swaggering, sexy, non-purist marriage of early blues, stompy glam-rock and slide-guitar screams, all in tracks you can dance to.

Hill country blues (and unusual tunings) set him on a path.

Redfern found the blues through hill country pioneers and slide players like Fred McDowell, Hound Dog Taylor and Son House. From there he discovered the works of Chris Whitley, in particular his use of the Celtic-derived Orkney tuning. “It’s just one of those that resonated with me,” he says. “So most of my guitars are set up in that tuning, and I write in it pretty much exclusively. It just works for me, it feels natural, it’s very organic.”

But Frank Zappa is his hero.

Raised on a turkey farm in the Wye Valley, with three older half-brothers, Redfern found his escape in rock’n’roll. His eldest brother gave him Queen’s *A Night At The Opera* album, which he loved. Marty McFly in *Back To The Future*, along with the 80s likes of Mötley Crüe and Aerosmith, steered him on to the guitar. But it’s Frank Zappa who holds a special place in Redfern’s heart: “I live that music, still. It’s one of the things I listen to in the car a lot. There’s lots of rhythmic and harmonic tension. I’ve always been drawn to that.”

He makes music quickly, and often.

Invocation was written and recorded (with Simon McBride producer Dave Marks) in under five weeks. It’s a good reflection of Redfern’s work rate: he gained traction with recent, bluesier records, but his full catalogue spans at least 15 albums. Check out the 11 on his Bandcamp page

and things get much weirder, veering into psychedelic space-rock territory that nods to his Zappa fandom. “I don’t consider myself to be a Nashville writer. They write in a more methodical way. I’m the opposite of that. For me it’s more like switching off the analytical part of your brain and letting ideas come through in the moment.”

Books and butchery are both on his CV.

Redfern has held down an interesting spread of jobs to pay the bills. Briefly he was an accountant. After that he worked as a butcher for six months, before veering off into electrical work, joinery and a tattoo/body-piercing parlour. His best job, though, was in a bookshop, where he read Shelley and Dostoevsky, and picked up ideas for song titles. “I’m really into the David Bowie, William Burroughs kind of thing, with the chopped up lyrics and fragmented ideas,” he says. “Take *Smokestack Lightning* by Howlin Wolf, which says nothing really, but there’s a texture, a feeling from that lyric that makes sense.”

Religion in his blood, but not his heart.

Like so many of his blues influences, Redfern grew up with God. His parents were evangelical Christians, but his brothers led him to question it quickly. As a teenager he brought home books on demonology and witchcraft. “They [parents] were pretty good about it,” concedes Redfern (now a father of two), “but there was a disconnect on lots of levels. I haven’t spoken to them in about four or five years, unfortunately. It’s a bit of a strange situation. But they were quite critical people.”

In another life he’d have been a comic artist.

Fired up by the post-apocalyptic imagery of *Mad Max*, and the (incidentally, *Mad Max*-inspired) visual palette of Mötley Crüe, 16-year-old Redfern dreamed of going to art college, but his plans were thwarted by family expectations. He keeps his hand in, though, by designing his album covers. “It’s super-satisfying, to feel like at least a little bit of me is able to get some of that out there. I don’t know if your eye gets better naturally, but I find it easier to make things instinctively. Maybe it’s just age, and the way you look at things.”

Invocation is out on May 17 via R&D7. Troy Redfern tours the UK in June and November.



ROB BLACKMAN/REXUS

Troy Redfern: not your average blues rocker in terms of music taste.



STEVE HARLEY

February 27, 1951 – March 17, 2024

Classic Rock's Dave Ling looks back at the life and music of the Cockney Rebel.

Steve Harley, the lead singer and songwriter for Cockney Rebel, has died of cancer. The 73-year-old, one of the more colourful rock stars of the 70s and beyond, passed away at his home in Suffolk one month after pausing his latest run of live shows in order to be treated for the condition. A post on Harley's website at the time read: "Due to ongoing treatment for cancer, Steve cannot commit to any concerts in 2024. Steve is hoping next year will be altogether different. He appreciates all your kind words and good wishes. Team SH."

In a statement, Harley's daughter Greta said: "We are devastated to announce that our wonderful Husband and Father has passed away peacefully at home, with his family by his side. The birdsong from his woodland that he loved so much was singing for him. His home has been filled with the sounds and laughter of his four grandchildren.

"Stephen. Steve. Dad. Grandad. Steve Harley. Whoever you know him as, his heart exuded only core elements. Passion, kindness, generosity. And much more, in abundance."

It concluded: "We know he will be desperately missed by people all over the world, and we ask that you respectfully allow us privacy to grieve."

The second of five children, Stephen Malcolm Ronald Nice was born in Deptford, South London. A fascinating, self-confident and wily character, he predicted success in his very first interview, hatching carefully calculated plans to stardom. The youngster had plenty of time in which to plot; between the ages of two and a half and 16, after contracting the highly contagious infection polio, he was hospitalised multiple times.

"I had a couple of long stretches, plus there were loads of three- and one-month periods," he told *Classic Rock's* Geoff Barton in 2004. "In those days if you needed physiotherapy they kept you in for months. [In total] I spent four years of my life in Queen Mary's Hospital For Children in Carshalton Beeches, Surrey."

It was during those long periods spent largely alone, getting stuck into the music of Bob Dylan and a pile of books by DH Lawrence and Ernest Hemingway, that Harley developed a fictional character who he named 'Little Steve'. Back in 2004, Harley admitted that despite the intervening decades, Little

Steve would make sporadic return visits to his consciousness. "Increasingly I find myself thinking about Little Steve, and how he was affected by those years of... solitary confinement, almost," Harley said.

He received an acoustic guitar from his parents when he was 10, and also took violin lessons from age nine to 15 and played in the school orchestra.

Leaving school at 17 without taking his A Levels, he became a trainee accountant in the Fleet Street offices of the *Daily Express* newspaper. Opting for a career in journalism, he trained with Essex County Newspapers in Colchester, then moved to the *East London Advertiser*, from which he was dismissed for various issues including growing his hair long and refusing to wear a tie.

After he entered the music world in 1971, singing for free in folk clubs on what would now be called open-mic nights (back then it was called floor-spotting). It was in the folk-rock group Odin that

Harley met future Cockney Rebel violinist Jean-Paul Croker. Indeed, the first line-up of Cockney Rebel did not include an electric guitarist. Harley later told *Classic Rock*: "To this day I have problems with electric guitar players, because they all want to be the singer. They're frustrated frontmen. The egos get in the way, which really bores me."

Harley was no shrinking violet himself, however, and in response to

early comparisons to David Bowie, a fellow South Londoner who had also started in the folk world, he bridled: "We're doing the same live circuit that Bowie did in seventy-two, but we're doing it much better."

Harley took a dislike to certain music journalists, especially those at *New Musical Express* who dismissed his band as 'Cocky Rabble'. At the Reading Festival years afterwards, he grabbed writer Charles Shaar Murray and "pinned him to the wall". The pair eventually buried the hatchet.

Although often cited as a glam-rock band, Cockney Rebel saw beyond the confines of the genre, often incorporating progressive rock and art-rock into their sound. Having been discovered by pop hitmaker Mickie Most, who signed them for publishing, they became a part of the EMI Records roster. Their 1973 debut album *The Human Menagerie* included ➤

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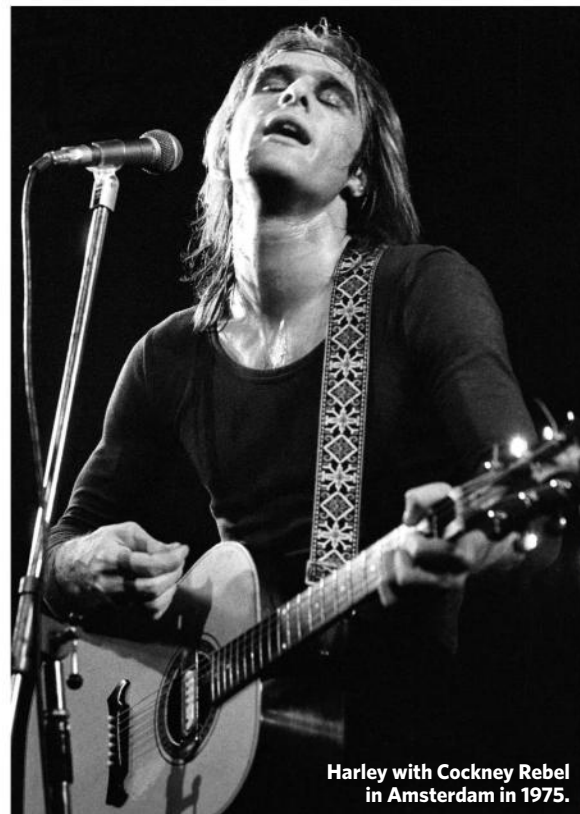
"Our hopes were to play some gigs, make a few records and maybe get shagged a bit."

Steve Harley on Cockney Rebel





Teen dreamers: Steve Harley And Cockney Rebel in 1974.



Harley with Cockney Rebel in Amsterdam in 1975.

a single, *Sebastian*, that took off on the continent, but the album failed to chart in Britain.

Encouraged by EMI to deliver a hit, Harley retooled an existing song, *Judy Teen*, which rocketed into the UK top five. The band's second album, *The Psychomodo*, co-produced by Harley and Alan Parsons, reached No.8. But behind the scenes internal pressures were growing, and Harley was forced to put together an entirely different line-up for the next album, *The Best Years Of Our Lives*.

Harley channelled his frustration in a song that would define his career. *Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)* topped the UK chart, and transformed the new-look band, which now included a guitarist, former Family man Jim Cregan, into a household name. Only drummer Stuart Elliott remained from the old line-up, the rest having departed in what Harley termed a "mutiny" over who would write the songs.

"That one was a bit of a finger pointer," he once said to *Classic Rock* of his signature song, which began with the line: 'You've done it all, you've broken every code.' "When those three guys [Jean-Paul Crocker, keyboard player Milton Reame-James and bassist Paul Jeffreys] walked out on me two weeks before I was going to be second beneath the headliner at the Reading Festival, we were on the verge of something very big. What they did was crazy."

All the same, topping the singles chart in his homeland was a highlight of both his career and his life.

"On the last night of an American tour, at the Sunset Marquis hotel in Los Angeles, my manager called to say we'd leapt from number nine to number

one," Harley reminisced. "We got the red-eye [overnight flight] home to do *Top Of The Pops*, and after a quick kip at the Kensington Hilton we went to Wood Lane [in London] where the programme was recorded... and I got the words wrong [laughs]. I was jet-lagged and I scrambled them up. But afterwards my life was never the same – nor should it have been."

"Those five decades were absolutely packed with adventure. I've lived a fantastic life."

Steve Harley

Although Cregan left to join Rod Stewart, the 'new' Cockney Rebel consolidated, and continued to release albums and singles. But the arrival of punk rock took the wind out of their sails, and Cockney Rebel split in 1977.

Harley released his debut solo album, *Hobo With A Grin*, the following year. He also appeared as a special guest on Kate Bush's 1979 *Tour Of Life*

at one of the Hammersmith Odeon shows, and sang on *I Robot* by the Alan Parsons Project and Rick Wakeman's album 1984. His great pal Rod Stewart covered three of Harley's songs, including *A Friend For Life*.

Harley told Geoff Barton that upping sticks and moving to California, where he did little but "get up late, drink champagne, have brunch and stay

up late again, doing drugs" was a big mistake. "It was the start of a serious decline in my popularity and my creativity."

Eventually, much to his astonishment and distress, his finances dried up. "I asked my accountant to transfer

some funds, and he told me the pot was empty," he rued.

He became a part of Andrew Lloyd Webber's stage production *The Phantom Of The Opera* for nine months, but Harley remembers the 80s as a "lost decade".

It was his showbusiness industry friend Steve Mather who suggested a return to the road.

Although Harley at first retorted: "I don't think I've got an audience" and found more reasons to pass than to agree, he chewed over the proposal and eventually agreed. It was a decision he never regretted, and he once again became a staple of the touring circuit, performing with an electric band as well as in an acoustic format.

He also continued to make albums, although economically compared to Cockney Rebel's 70s heyday. In some ways this was a throwback to the slings and arrows he had been subjected to in those times.

"In some ways I'm sort of better off not releasing a record than having it slagged off," he admitted. "I've a total





Still making 'em smile: Harley at the Giants Of Rock festival in Minehead in 2016.

fear of rejection, and I don't know why that is. I guess it goes all the way back to Little Steve in that hospital."

As the years passed, *Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)* became ever more ubiquitous, appearing in several films including *The Full Monty*, *Saving Grace* and *Blackball*.

"My wife Dorothy and I were in a taxi in Rome, and although the song wasn't a huge hit in Italy, it came on the radio," Harley told *Classic Rock* in 2015. "The driver was thumping away at the steering wheel, and as we got out I thought: 'If only I could tell you [that was my song],' but it would have been pointless."

Make Me Smile was also licensed for numerous advertising campaigns. It was a source of massive amusement for Harley when in 2018 it was used in a two-year campaign for erectile dysfunction treatment Viagra. "That was great, as a whole new generation Googled to see who sang the song," he said, quipping: "I did suggest they might want to use another of my hits, *Mr Soft*, instead."

With work-life balance restored, Harley's final years were pretty much idyllic. "My wife Dorothy and I are very lucky to live in a big house surrounded by two acres of woodland," he told *Classic Rock* in 2022. "I can walk for an hour without leaving my own property."

Returning to the road following the pandemic, he observed a change in his personality. "I've opened up," he said in the same interview. "I'm not anal about things any more. I let [the audience] closer. I offer them more; I'm telling them

more. The fear of the pandemic has helped me to relax. I'm not a religious man, but it's about a communion – coming together, sharing."

Despite that mellowing, his dislike of cynical, 'jobbing' music journalists never faded. In fact in some cases it became worse. He told Geoff Barton that a negative critique of his 1992 album *Yes You Can* still stuck in his craw.

"Q magazine gave it to this bozo to review and he stuck the knife in. For a review that he probably got paid something pathetic like twenty-five quid for, he wrote that I'm 'still apparently quite popular in some far-flung corners of the planet'. How dare he diminish me like that? He's a shit."

With eyebrows narrowing, the 'old' Steve Harley returned: "He will be in a room with me some day, and he will have to answer to me."

Harley continued to tour until the very end, telling fans that while his fight with cancer was both "tiresome and tiring", being on the road was "where I come alive". He added: "Thankfully the cursed intruder is not affecting the voice. I sing and play most evenings."

Two years ago, before he became ill and with Cockney Rebel notching their half-century in the business, Harley told *Classic Rock* that he could never have imagined the band reaching such a milestone.

"Of course not. We were just young lads," he said, smiling. "Our hopes were to play some gigs, make a few records and maybe get shagged a bit. It was as simple as that. But those five decades were absolutely packed with adventure. I've lived a fantastic life." 📌



STARS PAY TRIBUTE

"Words fail me. The Cockney Rebel has left us. I loved you and admired you, Steve, and always will."

Sir Rod Stewart

"Cockney Rebel were awesome, their first two albums were perfection, and then *Come Up And See Me* took Harley to the mainstream. We were so lucky to have him guest on our version of that song. The moment Steve entered the room was truly chilling."

John Taylor, Duran Duran

"Goodnight Steve. *Judy Teen* has always been one of my very favourite songs."

Ginger Wildheart

"Remembering the songs and a memorable tour in the US. Condolences to Steve's family."

Ray Davies

"Steve Harley was a true 'working musician'. He toured until he could tour no more, playing his songs for fans old and new. Our songs live on longer than we ever can."

Midge Ure

"I always considered Steve Harley a partially unknown treasure of British rock'n'roll music."

Probably because he was profoundly different from anyone else and that is his intellect and his lyricism put you on trial."

Michael Des Barres

"Another friend and contemporary has died. Steve was a generous supporter of our Rock Against Cancer festivals. The music he created will live forever."

Andy Scott, Sweet

"*Sebastian* introduced me to 'proper' music on Luxembourg Radio on holiday in Prestatyn in 1973. Steve you were my favourite songwriter. You made me smile. God bless."

Peter Hook

"The world has lost an extraordinary artist. Having had the privilege to perform alongside Steve, I witnessed the depth and soul he brought to music. His heart shone through."

Former David Bowie pianist Mike Garson





RUNNING WITH THE DEVIL

He may be “a hard rock guy at heart”, but with his latest album – a selection of classics of “the devil’s music”, each sung by a different guest singer – **Slash** is the latest rock superstar to take the blues road.

Words: **David Sinclair** Portraits: **Ross Halfin**

Slash is holed up in Birmingham, preparing for the second night of his UK tour with Myles Kennedy & The Conspirators. But, to paraphrase Billy F Gibbons, his head’s in Mississippi as he talks with urgent passion about his new album of mostly blues songs, featuring a host of star singers and players including Gibbons, Brian Johnson, Iggy Pop, Chris Robinson, Beth Hart, Chris Stapleton, Steven Tyler and Gary Clark Jr, among others. It’s called *Orgy Of The Damned*, which sounds like quite the party.

“It’s roughly a blues covers record,” Slash says. “And I thought with all this collaboration with all these different people, and blues historically being considered the devil’s music and taboo – you know, hide your kids from the fucking blues stuff – that *Orgy Of The Damned* seemed like a fitting title. I didn’t really think about it. It just sort of popped up.”

With the album title decided, some appropriately garish, Slash-style cover artwork commissioned, boom! – a collection of songs written and first performed by blues legends including Robert Johnson, Howlin’ Wolf and Muddy Waters is once again back in circulation on the top table of rock. So what were those guys doing 60, 70 and even 80 years ago that was so special?

“It depends on who you speak to, because everybody has got a different idea as to what it means to them,” Slash says. “For me it’s totally about the feel of it, the cadence of it, the attitude of it, the spirit of it, and of course the rhythm to it.”

Blues remains the genre that sits at magnetic north on the classic-rock compass. But by rejuvenating such well-worn songs as *Hoochie Coochie Man*, *Crossroads*, *Killing Floor*, *Born Under A Bad Sign* and *Stormy Monday*, along with rock and R&B standards including *Oh Well*, *The Pusher* and *Papa Was A Rolling Stone*, Slash is putting his neck on the line twice over; not only is he boldly appropriating the work of the original blues masters, but he is also inviting comparisons with the greatest rock bands of the 1960s including Cream, Fleetwood Mac, John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers and all the rest.

“You know, if I were to think about it in those terms, then I would pack it up and go home,” Slash says, solemnly. “A lot of people have been asking me a lot of really deep questions and, man, it just wasn’t about any of that. It was really just, y’know, I like this song, this is the way that I would play it, and we jammed it, this is the arrangement we

came up with and so-and-so sang it, and there you go. There’s a lot of really serious blues purists out there. Really studied and well-learned, well-researched blues guys out there, and they’re great players and they stick to a certain blues guideline, and they know all the notes and everything’s perfect. This isn’t that. This is just me having a good time. It’s not even all traditional blues in the first place. It’s a mix of different things. But it was just kind of a fun thing that I don’t want anybody to over-analyse or try and pick it apart, because it just wasn’t put together with that many pieces to begin with.” ➤

“**This blues album was a big outlet for me to be able to do something that I love to do.**”



It was the great American blues legends who inspired Slash when he first started playing.

“When you’re cold-calling musicians, some of whom you don’t even know, it doesn’t matter who you are. It’s a hard gig.”

Orgy Of The Damned might well be the spontaneous, off-the-cuff project that Slash insists it is. But in another sense it’s an album that has been 30 years in the making – at least. Slash was first exposed to the British blues bands of the 60s when he was a child in England, and then when he moved to Los Angeles his grandmother turned him on to BB King.

“When I first picked up the guitar, the guys that I was inspired by were all heavily inspired by Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf and Robert Johnson, BB King and Albert King. So that is really the root of where my guitar playing came from. At the same time, I was totally into brash hard rock stuff. But the bands that I was really influenced by in that realm were AC/DC, Aerosmith and bands in that sort of area of hard rock. Not so much metal, but more of a blues-based kind of a thing anyway. So it’s always been about roughly the same kind of feel. Just different dynamics of how it’s delivered.”

In 1996, after Slash had left Guns N’ Roses and between iterations of his Snakepit, he put together a side-hustle band called Slash’s Blues Ball with

bassist Johnny Griparic and singer/keyboard player Teddy Andreadis.

“It was just us getting together and we would just play in all these LA dives,” Slash recalls. “There was a lot of drinking going on, but we were having a real good time, playing all these covers and jamming around. And we actually took it to the point of touring round the US and we even did some touring in Europe. Anyway, I always wanted to make a record of that. But then there was Snakepit, then I was in hospital, then Velvet Revolver, then the Conspirators, then back to Guns N’ Roses... It’s just been very busy. Anyway, thirty years later I finally had two weeks off, and I thought I’m going to do this record now.”

The first thing Slash did was to get back together with Griparic and Andreadis, along with new collaborators Tash Neal (vocals/guitar) and Michael Jerome (drums), and start rehearsing a list of songs, some of which they used to play back in the 90s.

“These guys are great players who play in real

Orgy Of The Damned players (from top) Johnny Griparic, Teddy Andreadis, Michael Jerome and Tash Neal.

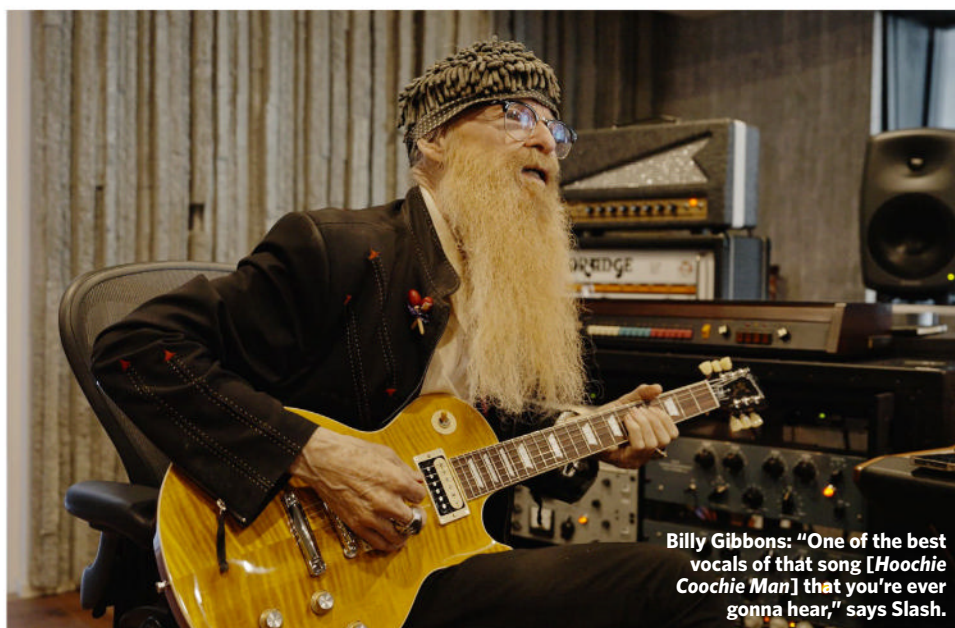


blues bands for a living,” Slash says. “But I thought I don’t wanna put myself up against all the other fucking blues guys out there, where it’s just me trying to do a blues record, because I’m gonna lose. That’s when I got the idea of having different singers come in and make this a little bit more eclectic. Then finally I sort of broke the news to the band. ‘I’m gonna have Gary Clark come in and do a song. And I’m gonna have Demi Lovato sing this, and Paul Rodgers sing this...’ That’s how it all came together.”

Working with *Appetite For Destruction* producer Mike Clink, the band recorded all the music and one or two of the vocals at East West Studios and Slash’s own Snakepit studio in Los Angeles, over the two weeks that Slash had off from his Guns N’ Roses commitments in the spring of 2023. Later he went out and rounded up the other guest singers. And while you might think it would be straightforward for a star of Slash’s status and



Brian Johnson: an extraordinary vocal performance on Howlin' Wolf's *Killing Floor*.



Billy Gibbons: "One of the best vocals of that song [*Hoochie Coochie Man*] that you're ever gonna hear," says Slash.

"Billy Gibbons is one of these guys that effortlessly puts down an amazing selection of notes in a melodic perfection."

magnitude to get hold of a gang of his A-list chums, he insists that is not the case.

"Listen, when you're cold-calling musicians, some of whom you don't even know, it doesn't matter who you are. It's a hard gig. You're trying to sell an idea. The two hardest ones to nail down were Chris Stapleton and Billy Gibbons. Billy's all over the place. He's always working and he's always doing something. I told him I was doing a version of *Hoochie Coochie Man*, and I knew from his tone of voice that he was sceptical. I mean, he knows me, but... Anyway I had to coax him into it. Then finally I gave him a demo, and he says: 'I'm gonna be in Palm Springs. We got a studio over there.' So I wasn't there when he did it. He just rolled into town during whatever road trip he was on, went into the studio and put the vocals and the guitars down. And that vocal is one of the best vocals of that song that you're ever gonna hear.

"I feel really honoured that he's on the record. And the guitar lick that he put on there... I mean, literally, I got it back, I had to sit down with my guitar and learn it, cos it's so fucking awesome. He's one of these guys that effortlessly puts down

an amazing selection of notes in a melodic perfection. It just comes off the top of his head."

The one singer who didn't return Slash's calls was Steven Tyler.

"He was incommunicado for a month. And then, when the record was done, I finally heard from him: 'Oh man, I've been here and there. What's happening?' And that's why he came down to put the harmonica on *Killing Floor*."

Killing Floor is the first single and one of the standout performances on the album by everyone in the band; a super-energised rhythm section groove overlaid with an extraordinary vocal by Brian Johnson, sounding like you've never heard him before. Who knew he could sing that low?

"He was the first guy that I thought of for that song," Slash says. "I had the music, and I flew over to Florida and we started doing the session, and I could tell that he wanted to do the original version a certain kind of justice by singing it in the register that Howlin' Wolf did it. But there was ➤

THE STORIES BEHIND THE ORGY SONGS

The Pusher

Written by Hoyt Axton

'I've seen a lot of people walking around with tombstones in their eyes, but the pusher don't care if you live or if you die...'

Those haunting words are forever linked to the opening scene of the 1969 classic film *Easy Rider*: sun-scorched desert, Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda on their chopper motorcycles, on the lam with the loot from a cocaine deal. And roiling beneath the action, Steppenwolf's cover of Hoyt Axton's *The Pusher*.

Coming out of the West Coast folk scene of the late 1950s, Axton first made his mark with *Greenback Dollar*, a hit for The Kingston Trio. By the early 60s he was a regular performer at LA clubs like The Ash Grove and The Troubadour. That's where Steppenwolf singer John Kay heard him sing *The Pusher*, a song Axton wrote after one of his friends died from an overdose. "The Pusher brought down the house every time he played it," Kay said.

Although *The Pusher* wasn't the first song played on the radio to have obvious drug references, it was the first to include 'God damn' - as in 'God damn the pusher man.'

Hoyt Axton went on to have a long, successful career, writing such hits as *Joy To The World* for Three Dog Night, *Never Been To Spain* for Elvis Presley and *The No No Song* for Ringo Starr. He died of a heart attack in 1999.



Crossroad Blues

Written by Robert Johnson

No other word gets at the mystique of the blues like 'Crossroads.' It's a metaphor for a life in the balance, and the location of that enduring origin story of how Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil in return for musical genius.

Even without that myth, Johnson's life has been veiled in mystery and speculation. Born in Mississippi in 1911, he recorded 29 sides during three recording sessions in 1936 and 1937. Those songs, and two photographs, are all that

remains. In 1938 he was murdered, purportedly by a jealous husband who poisoned his glass of whisky. Johnson was 27, the founding member of that morbid '27 club' that would later include Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison.

One of his best-known songs, *Crossroad Blues*,



capture's Johnson's raw sorcery. The driving, scratchy slide guitar, the tendon-taut vocals, the bare-wire emotion. It's two minutes and 40 seconds that once heard can never be forgotten.

Although Johnson's songs have been covered by Cream, the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin and many more, there is something about the originals that defies interpretation. ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons said: "As many times as a Robert Johnson number has been covered, no one has yet recaptured what guitar players would refer to as that internal DNA of Robert Johnson. This was just one guy. Meat on metal on wood. But what he came with was fierce."

Hoochie Coochie Man

Written by Willie Dixon

Like so many blues standards, *I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man* began, in 1954, as a one-two between Willie Dixon (who wrote it) and

Muddy Waters (who supplied the velveteen vocal). Yet the relaxed push-and-pull of this Chess Records benchmark perhaps belied Dixon's desperation. Although pushing 40, the songwriter was at that point a marginal back-room figure at the Chicago label, and having scored a minor hit with

the previous year's Muddy-fronted *Mad Love* (*I Want You To Love Me*), he was looking to earn owner Leonard Chess's trust with this sequel.

"If Muddy likes it, give it to him," the boss man is reported to have said, and Dixon duly gave the bluesman the hard sell, repeatedly visiting Waters at club shows to help him iron out *Hoochie Coochie Man*'s stop-start arrangement, and massage a lyric pitched somewhere between a classic blues brag and a spooky southern gothic ("This lady is a witch," Dixon wrote in his autobiography, *I Am The Blues*, of the "gypsy woman" who predicts the unborn narrator's sexual exploits to come).

Dixon got his breakthrough – and Waters the biggest hit of his career – and 70 years later it's impossible to imagine the genre without it including this cornerstone.

Oh Well

Written by Peter Green

"It represents my two extremes," Fleetwood Mac guitarist Peter Green said of this eight-minute epic. "As wild as I can be, and my first sort of semi-classical attempt."

In 1969, Green pushed for *Oh Well*'s release as a single, despite its unorthodox form. And he wanted the moody, flamenco-flavored back half to be the A-side of the 45, the "wild" bluesy section the B-side. The band's label disagreed.

Green's bandmates

Mick Fleetwood and John McVie went even further, betting him eight pounds apiece that the single would flop, regardless of what the



Beth Hart: delivering a huge emotional payload on *Stormy Monday*.

"[Being a singer] is not my thing. I don't have the personality for it... It's just not in me."

a couple of moments where he sung it in his usual high register, and it sounded very much like AC/DC covering Howlin' Wolf. And I don't think either of us really wanted to do that."

The album opens with a muscular version of *The Pusher*, a song made famous by Steppenwolf, whose version became a counter-culture classic after it was included on the soundtrack of the 1969 film *Easy Rider*. The vocal and harmonica solo are by Chris Robinson of The Black Crowes.

"Chris and I have known each other since 1989, I think. Not super-close. I guess you could call us acquaintances over the years. We'd never worked together before. So he came in to my studio in LA and he just blew my mind. He did two amazingly perfect fucking takes, with harmonica live, on the same mic, y'know. Two different versions of it – two different approaches to it – and they were both amazing. I was really floored. And I love Chris to death for that. I was so impressed with it."

Paul Rodgers and Slash go back to the days when Rodgers invited Slash to play on his own blues covers album, *Muddy Water Blues: A Tribute To Muddy Waters*, released in 1993. Slash was the new kid on the block at that time, and Rodgers was one of his heroes.

"With Paul, I was fortunate enough for some reason he seemed to take to me back in the day. He's somebody that I have revered so much as a singer all my life,

and for him to sort of take me in like that was really cool. I jammed with him with Queen once, live in LA with Brian May and all that, so I've known him for a long time. He was the first person that I thought of when I was doing *Born Under A Bad Sign*, and he did pretty much what I would call a sublime version. It's so cool, and it's so like why he is one of the best blues rock'n'roll singers from the late 1960s on."

Beth Hart delivers a huge emotional payload on her version of *Stormy Monday*, the track that boasts perhaps the best blues guitar playing by Slash on the entire album. It is not the result you might have expected, given the conditions under which it was recorded. Slash and the band had rehearsed the song in a major key. Hart suggested doing it in a minor key. The band were in the studio working up the new version when Hart showed up.

"We were just rehearsing it, and she jumped in and sang it," Slash recalls.

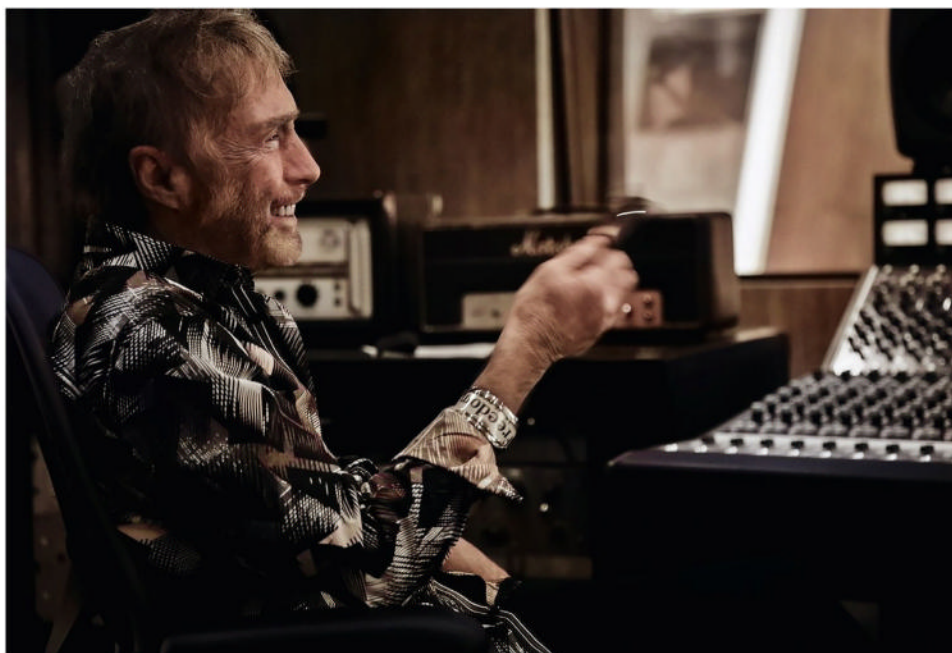
"She's just belting it out. She put her heart and soul into it. She'd just come back from Jeff Beck's memorial – and Beth is a highly emotional individual anyway – so she was really fucking distraught, and you can really

hear it in the delivery. And when she was done, she was gone. That was it. There were no other takes to be had. And that's the version that is on the record. My playing is like: 'Oh I could have played this better, I could have played that better,' but it is what it is, y'know?" ➤





Guests participating in the *Orgy* include (from top) Steven Tyler on harmonica, and Gary Clark Jr. and Paul Rodgers on vocals.



A-side was. It was a bet they lost.

A hit on both sides of the Atlantic, *Oh Well* became a featured part of the band's live set, though the instrumental section soon got dropped. Even 25 years later, that rankled Green. "The best bit was Part 2, the Spanish guitar break," he told *Mojo* in 1996, "I used to hate playing that one [live] because we played the part that wasn't as good. I wanted a bit of moody guitar playing; they wanted the bit that was easy to do, that everyone knew."

Green's dismissal of *Oh Well* didn't prevent it from becoming a rock perennial, and also the only Fleetwood Mac song to be performed by every incarnation of the band, with guitarists from Bob Welch to Lindsey Buckingham to Mike Campbell tackling Green's not so "easy" gordian knot of a riff.

Key To The Highway

Written by Charles Segar, William Broonzy

Although he took the credit, Chicago piano man Charlie Segar's 1940 recording of *Key To The Highway* for the Vocalion label was a cross-pollination of a thousand existing song shards, rather than a strictly 'original' composition (Big Bill Broonzy, who tackled it next, reasoned that "practically all of blues is just a little change... you take one song and make fifty out of it").

Whatever its provenance, *Key To The Highway* struck a pan-generational chord among touring musicians who could relate to the sweet sorrow of parting (in almost all its forms, the lyric finds the itinerant narrator pleading for 'one more kiss' from his lover, in the knowledge that he 'won't be back no more').

Harp king Little Walter scored a hit with his all-star cover in 1958, but the bluesman who worked the song hardest was Eric Clapton. In 1970, producer Tom Dowd scrambled to roll tape as Clapton and Duane Allman jammed it to nine-plus minutes during sessions for the Derek And The Dominos album *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs*. Clapton later revisited the song at his 1973 Rainbow Concert, when guesting on Johnnie Johnson's *Johnnie B. Bad* album of 1991, and on his own 2000 double-header alongside BB, *Riding With The King*.

Awful Dream(s)

Written by Sam 'Lightnin' Hopkins, Clarence Lewis & C. Morgan Robinson

Asked to define the blues, Lightnin' Hopkins once said: "The blues is a feeling. It's something worrying people. Your wife quits you. Your girlfriend quits you. Or maybe you want to go to a party and you don't have sufficient clothes. You sit home and worry. You got the blues, man. It's not no jive. You ever hear of a person going up on a building and jumping off and breaking their own legs? You know what they got? The blues three times!"

The rhythm of that discursive answer, with its black humour and existential perspective, found its way into all of Lightnin's songs.

Born Samuel Hopkins in Texas in 1911 (or 1912), he learned to play and sing at an early



age, travelling on the road with a blues singer named Texas Alexander. Hopkins made his first recordings in 1946, already experimenting with the distorted, amplified roar that would become a hallmark of his style.

A kind of blues philosopher, his subject matter ranged from the personal to the global. Recorded in 1962, around the time of the Cuban missile crisis, *Awful Dream(s)* conveys the dread of living in the long shadow of the atomic bomb. And typical of his style, the song meanders across bar lines, with his guitar dropping commentary licks around his intimate, chilling vocal.



Born Under A Bad Sign

Written by William Bell & Booker T. Jones

By 1966, Albert King had gone five long years without a hit, and Stax Records seemed unlikely to reverse his fortunes (when the singer made his pitch to join the roster, label co-founder Estelle Axton told him: "We're doing R&B, not blues").

Laundromat Blues got King's foot in the door, but the bluesman's great rebirth might never have happened without a late-night writing session between Stax artist William Bell (who had a UK Top 10 hit with *Private Number* in 1968) and fabled keyboard man Booker T. Jones (leader of the label's crack-squad house band The M.G.'s).

"William walked in and said: 'We need to write a song by tomorrow for Albert King,'" recalled Jones. "I remember coming up with the riff, then William put his thinking cap on, and the next thing I know he sang: 'Born under a bad sign...'"

As the title track of King's 1967 masterpiece, *Born Under A Bad Sign* was the ultimate hard-times lament ('If it wasn't for bad luck', runs the classic line, 'you know I wouldn't have no luck at all'). But ironically, thanks to its rock stylings, the song gave the formidable bluesman a crossover hit (today it's nudging 53 million streams on Spotify). As Jones once said: "Eric Clapton is still trying to play like that!"

Papa Was A Rolling Stone

Written by Barrett Strong & Norman Whitfield

At the end of the 1960s, Motown songwriting duo Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong began pushing beyond the label's love-song boundaries with such socially conscious epics as *Ball Of Confusion* and *Runaway Child, Running Wild*. The pinnacle of their long-form experiments, *Papa Was A Rolling Stone*, began as a 12-minute instrumental by Whitfield.

"Norman wanted lyrics that were fun, not serious," Strong told the *Wall Street Journal*. "But I didn't hear the music the way he did.



Iggy Pop: "I could tell that it meant a lot to Iggy to sing that song [Lightnin' Hopkins's *Awful Dream*]," Slash says.

"Iggy had always wanted to do a blues thing and had just never had the chance to do it."

At the end of the track you can hear a clearly overwrought Hart proclaiming to no one in particular: "God, that was fuck-ing-bad-ass shit!"

"Yeah," Slash ponders. "We left that on there because it gives you some insight into how unbelievably physical her performance was and how much blood and sweat went into that take."

Perhaps the most counter-intuitive guest on the album – and singing the most obscure song – is Iggy Pop. How did the Godfather of Punk get to make his debut as a blues singer?

"Johnny [Gripic, bass player] read somewhere that Iggy had always wanted to do a blues thing and had just never had the chance to do it. I'd obviously worked with Iggy a lot over the years. So I called him up and I said: 'Is there a song that you would particularly like to do?' And without even missing a beat he said *Awful Dream* by Lightnin' Hopkins. So I listened to the original, and it almost sounds like an out-take. Nobody's playing the same thing at the same time, but it's just got this really greasy, cool vibe. The lyrics are great. I never actually learned it. It was almost impossible to learn off that version.

"Iggy came down to my studio in LA and we just sat on a couple of stools and played it live and he just belted it out. We get towards the end of the song, and I'm hearing this sound. And I'm thinking: 'What the fuck is that?' And it's Iggy mimicking a harmonica. And it was just such a cool moment. I could tell that it meant a lot to Iggy to sing that song. Not to do it for me or anything else, but to do it for himself. So I thought it was a really cool capture of a moment in time."

As a guitar hero who doesn't sing, Slash is a member of a respectable club that includes Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Eddie Van Halen and Ritchie Blackmore among its more celebrated members. But has he ever wanted or tried to be a singer himself?

"There was a moment in time when I couldn't find singers, that I spent probably a good six months or eight months as the singer of a three-piece. And I did it. But it's not my thing. I don't have the personality for it. I just don't have that kind of outspoken, kind of... where I want to emote verbally to people. It's just not in me."

Do you think singers have a different mind-set from guitarists?

"It's a good question. In my experience, all the singers that I know are way more... The way to communicate your feelings and all that in a song, and to be able to have eye contact and to be able to perform and to be able to do that is something unworldly to me. I can't conceive of going out and doing that. So there's something in a singer's personality and their make-up that makes it possible for them to be able to express ➤



Chris Robinson: "Two amazingly perfect fucking takes, with harmonica live, on the same mic," Slash marvels.

Something about the bass line spoke to me. It was the sound of someone confused about something and trying to make sense of it."

Barrett's approach took the form of a ghetto child asking his mother about his late father. "She rationalises the father's bad behavior and blames it on his nature, even though they're left with nothing," Strong said. "It's about hopelessness and hope."

The original version, by The Undisputed Truth, peaked at No.63 in early 1972. Later that year, The Temptations - initially reluctant to tackle yet another of Whitfield and Strong's lengthy funk workouts - took it to No.1 (the single was a six-minute edit), racking up three Grammys, including Best R&B Song.

A masterpiece of production as much as composition, *Papa's* smouldering knit of bass, hi-hat, wah-wah guitar and shivery strings lends the Temptations' trademark vocal hand-offs extra poignancy. "Norman had the capacity to bring out everybody's talent instead of just one singer at a time," Temptations bass vocalist Melvin Franklin said.



Killing Floor

Written by Chester Burnett, aka Howlin' Wolf

"The blues is problems," the legendary Howlin' Wolf told *Crawdaddy* in 1966. "If you don't have problems today, you have them tomorrow."

Born Chester Burnett, he brought the Delta blues of his native Mississippi and a deep feeling for those everyday problems to Chess Records in Chicago in the early 1950s, becoming one of that city's titans of electric blues, alongside Willie Dixon and Muddy Waters. A man of massive frame, with a feral voice, Burnett chose the perfect stage name in Howlin' Wolf. And no song better represents his raw, powerful style than *Killing Floor*.

Set against an upbeat blues progression, the lyric uses the area of a slaughterhouse where animals are killed as a metaphor for a relationship gone bad. As Wolf's longtime guitarist Hubert Sumlin said: "Down on the killing floor - that means a woman has you down, she went out of her way to try to kill you." And even though the singer gets away in the song, part of him is still there on the killing floor, wishing she had finished the job.

Like several Howlin' Wolf classics - *Spoonful* and *Smokestack Lightning* among them - *Killing Floor* has been covered by many artists, including Albert King and Jimi Hendrix. It also provided the DNA for Led Zeppelin's *The Lemon Song*, so much so that the band gave Wolf a co-writing credit.

Moving on: Slash says his next blues album will be originals rather than covers.





“I’m a hard-rock guy at heart. But this kind of blues guitar playing for me has always been the basis for everything.”

themselves in that way. Guitar players by and large hide behind their guitar. I know I do. So yeah, they’re very different animals.”

What Slash really likes doing is hanging with musicians and playing shows. And to promote *Orgy Of The Damned* he has announced a US Blues Festival tour beginning in July. Each date will be a multi-act, one-day festival, with performers hand-picked by Slash and his management, including the Warren Haynes Band, Keb’ Mo’, Christone ‘Kingfish’ Ingram, Robert Randolph, Samantha Fish, Eric Gales, ZZ Ward, Jackie Venson and Larkin Poe. Slash has called it the S.E.R.P.E.N.T. Tour – an acronym that stands for Solidarity, Engagement, Restore, Peace, Equality N’ Tolerance.

“I think it’s that time where I want to do something where it’s trying to bring people together and trying to eliminate some of the differences and some of the walls and shit that’s going on between people. Cos we’re in a really fucking questionable period. A lot of people are being marginalised. And I only see it getting worse, the way things are going. I wanted to try and contribute in some way and help some of the people that have been unfortunate as we’ve been going down this path. Racial equality is something that I think is being, y’know, questioned here. So I wanted to do something that brought people together, because this has been... especially in the US, a really divisive period. Obviously I’m mixed race, right, so I’ve seen it from both sides.”

Accordingly, Slash has announced that a percentage of the profits from the tour will be going to several activist-group charities including the Equal Justice Initiative and the Know Your

Rights Camp, among others. Will there be anything left to pay all the bands?

“There will hopefully be enough money to pay the artists [laughs]. I have to pay them. But the rest of it will be going to these different charitable groups.”

After the S.E.R.P.E.N.T. tour, plans are in hand to record a new *Conspirators* album. Guns N’ Roses currently have no plans to tour, although Slash says that a new GN’R record has been “on the books for a while and should start coming together”.

“This blues album was a big outlet for me to be able to do something that I love to do. I love what I do in Guns N’ Roses. I love what I do with the *Conspirators* and anything else that I do. I’m a hard-rock guy at heart. That’s where I come from. But this kind of blues guitar playing for me has always been the basis for everything. So I always find myself jamming it with people I don’t know in bars and cities where I just happen to be able to get the opportunity to sit in or whatever. So looking ahead, I’m hoping that I get to do this kind of festival thing maybe every year. And then I’ll probably want to put out another blues record – probably of originals at this point – but we’ll see what happens.”

It all seems so effortless.

“Well it’s not that it’s effortless, it’s just it’s fun, you know?”

Orgy Of The Damned is out on May 17 via Gibson Records.



Living For The City

Written by Stevie Wonder

In an interview with saxophonist and Stevie Wonder band member David Sanborn, he said: “Making records for Motown in the sixties for Stevie was like being part of the old studio system in Hollywood. But by the early seventies he became more like the young maverick directors, Scorsese and Coppola, taking over.”

It’s an apt comparison, especially with *Living For The City*, which unfolds like a gritty seven-minute movie, tackling social class and racial injustice. The song follows a young man from his ‘hard time Mississippi’ upbringing to New York City. He arrives with hopes of employment and better life, but through a ‘wrong place, wrong time’ moment is arrested in a drug bust, then sentenced to 10 years in prison. Is there a more brutal moment in music than the cell door slamming with the policeman’s racial slur?

As with many of the songs on his trio of classic 70s albums – *Talking Book*, *Innervisions* and *Fulfillingness’ First Finale* – Wonder played all the instruments.

Living For The City was a US No.1 and won a Grammy for Best R&B Song.

“I think the deepest I really got into how I feel about the way things are was in this song,” Wonder said. “I was able to show the hurt and the anger.”

Stormy Monday

Written by T-Bone Walker

Call It Stormy Monday But Tuesday Is Just As Bad – to give the original 1947 release its full title – wasn’t Aaron Thibaux Walker’s first major contribution to the genre (the Texan guitarist had already pricked up ears in the Les Hite

Orchestra with 1940’s highly influential *T-Bone Blues*). Yet this pioneering example of electric blues represented revolution at every level, from Walker’s unprecedented touch on the incoming instrument, to his stripped-back band format, which encouraged kids around the world to plug in and try their luck (no brass section required).

To Walker’s frustration, that unwieldy song title (chosen to set it apart) came back to bite him, with musicians including Bobby ‘Blue’ Bland shortening it

to *Stormy Monday Blues* for their own renditions, and royalties often finding their way to the authors of a 1942 jazz hit with the same title.

Yet while he suffered financially, Walker’s legacy was inestimable – without his best-known hit, A-list acolytes such as BB King, Chuck Berry, Clarence ‘Gatemouth’ Brown, Albert King and Lowell Fulson might never have taken up the electric guitar. “The first line, the first thrilling notes, the first sound of his guitar, and the attitude in his voice,” BB once said. “It was riveting.”



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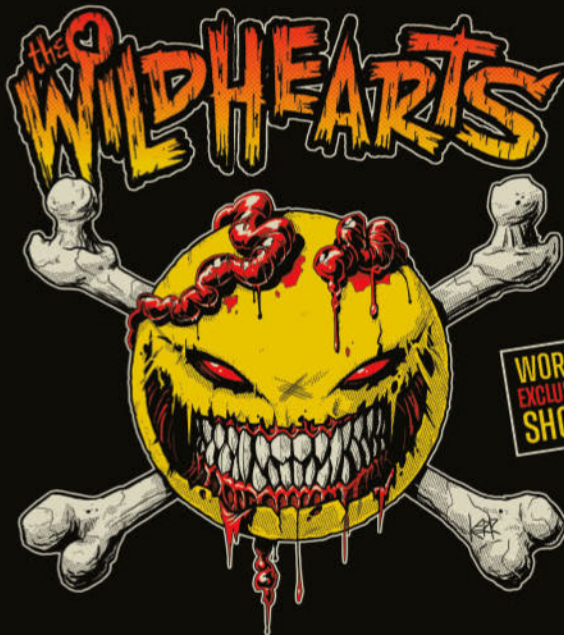
KIM JENNETT

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THE
★CLASSIC★
Rock
INTERVIEW

SEBASTIAN BACH

He was the youth gone wild: played clubs and guzzled beer at 14; fronted Skid Row and got hit records, star friends, a taste for coke, and the sack; drank more beer; toured with musical theatre productions; has a solo career... "I've had a pretty fucking extraordinary life," he says.

Interview: **Dave Everley**



SEBASTIAN BACH

Skid Row in 1988: (l-r) Scotti Hill, Rachel Bolan, Sebastian Bach, Dave Sabo, Rob Affuso.



“The more I listened to *18 And Life* and *Youth Gone Wild*, the more I knew that these songs were meant for me to sing.”

Sebastian Bach’s enthusiasm for life in general and music in particular is permanently off the scale. Within the first 10 minutes of our conversation today he has already excitedly name-checked Kiss, Van Halen, Twisted Sister, Rush, Queensrÿche and, most surprisingly, 80s UK glam tarts Wrathchild.

“I fucking loved that band,” he says of the latter, then launches into their song *Trash Queen*. “‘Trash queen, trash queen... she’ll suck you clean!’ Man, I have that album on red vinyl.”

Right now, though, he’s most excited by his own music. And rightly so. His new solo album, *Child Within The Man*, is his first in a decade, and only his third studio album since he was fired from his former band, New Jersey hellions Skid Row, in 1996. It’s a terrific record, a souped-up version of the kind of hard rock with which he originally made his name, with Bach’s powerhouse voice and megawatt charisma the neutron star powering it.

But then he was always one of rock’n’roll’s great frontman: six-foot-three of poster-boy good looks and unfiltered attitude. The son of the late artist David Bierk, whose work

adorned the sleeves of Skid Row’s *Slave To The Grind* and *Subhuman Race* albums, as well as every Bach solo album up to and including *Child Within The Man*, he was born in the Bahamas and raised the town of Peterborough, Canada. He may have been educated at the private Lakefield College (other notable alumni: Prince Andrew, and *Arrested Development* star Will Arnett), but rock’n’roll got its claws in him early – he was playing clubs with his first band, Kid Wikkid, at the age of 14.

It was as frontman with Skid Row that he made his name. With Jon Bon Jovi and his management company in their corner, their vertiginous rise saw Bach become one of rock’s most recognisable faces when he was barely out of his teens. Their first two albums, 1989’s self-titled debut and 1991’s *Slave To The Grind*, were huge hits – the latter even reached No.1 in the US. But it was always a fractious union between the punk kid from Canada and his New Jersey bandmates, and Bach was fired from Skid Row in 1996. When they returned a few years later, it was without him.

His own path has been marked by some dizzying highs and soul-scraping lows. He’s done TV, films and, famously, a stint on Broadway, and he counts the likes of Rob

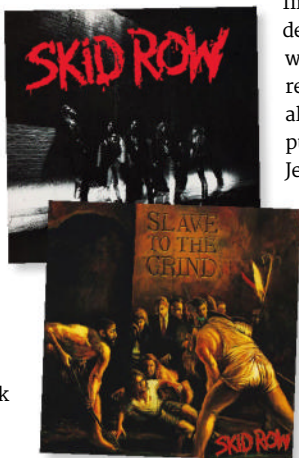
Halford and Axl Rose as friends. But then there were the lean post-Skid Row years, which found him struggling to recapture past glories. He had the traumatic experience of having his house destroyed by Hurricane Irene in 2011, losing many possessions in the process.

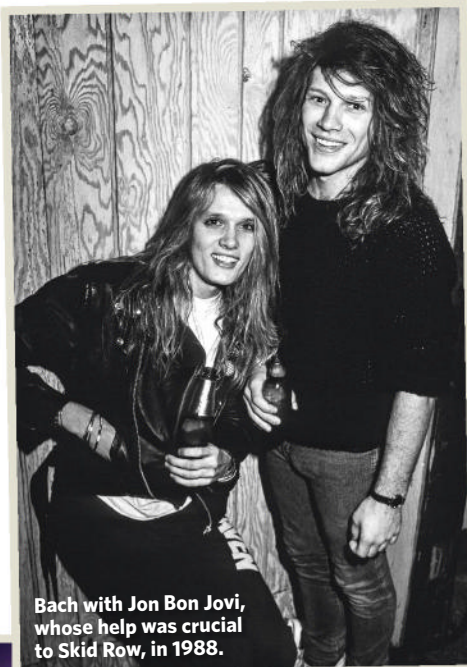
“I’ve had a pretty fucking extraordinary life,” he says. And he’s not joking.

Who was the first musician that made you think: “I could do that”?

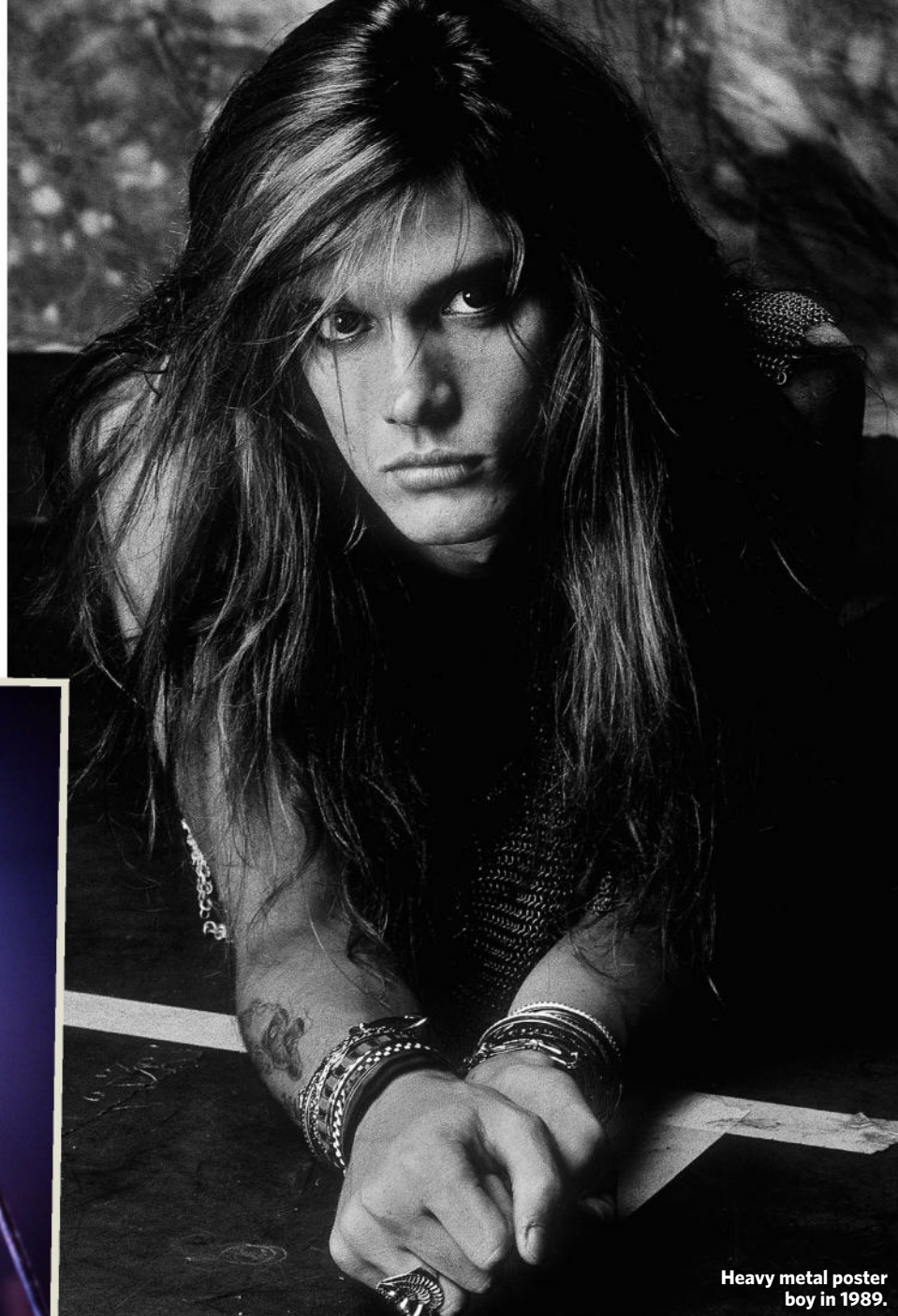
The first musician I became really obsessed with was Elton John. *Saturday Night’s Alright For Fighting* was one of the heaviest songs I’d heard when I was a little boy – it was heavy metal to me. But I never thought I could be Elton John, or Kiss or Cheap Trick or Rush. But I saw Mötley Crüe on the *Theater Of Pain* tour in Ottawa. For the first time ever, I was staring at the stage thinking: “Why am I in the audience?” It was the most powerful feeling I had ever felt: “Hey, idiot, go fucking do your own band.” It was almost like I couldn’t wait to get out of there. It was the weirdest feeling.

You were already in a band, Kid Wikkid by then. You’d joined them when you were fifteen. That must have been a crash course in rock’n’roll. I might have even been fourteen. I used to tease my hair up like [Wrathchild frontman] Rocky Shades. I was six-foot-three when I was fourteen, and my hair was another foot and a half. I wore





Bach with Jon Bon Jovi, whose help was crucial to Skid Row, in 1988.



Heavy metal poster boy in 1989.



“Looking back, we probably would have never made it without [Jon Bon Jovi’s] help. It wouldn’t have been possible.”

the tallest boots that I could find, and I was about a hundred and seventy pounds. I wore so much make-up that no club owner ever questioned my age. Nobody ever said: “Are you old enough?”

Were your parents supportive?

My dad was supportive, but he had terms. He wanted me to finish school. He said: “I will pay for vocal lessons in Toronto, under the condition that if you ever miss one I will stop paying for them.” He was not supportive of me moving from Peterborough to Toronto and playing in clubs at the age of fourteen or fifteen.

What were you like back then? If I’d met you at that time, what would I have thought of you?

I liked to party. I loved drinking beer. I drank fucking tons of beer when I was a kid. I used to go to gigs all the time. That’s the kind of guy you

would meet – a very enthusiastic fan and collector of rock music. I haven’t changed at all.

After Kid Wikkid, you had a brief stint in Madam X, who had already released an album. Did you think: “This is it, I’ve hit the big time”?

Well, I did think that. It didn’t quite turn out that way. All I can say about Madam X is that the focus was one hundred percent on the look of the band. We spent all our time in the bass player’s backyard, making a paper maché head that would go behind the drums and open its mouth. When I joined Skid Row, the whole focus of that band was about the songs.

You came to Jon Bon Jovi’s attention after singing at noted rock photographer Mark Weiss’s wedding. How did that happen?

Someone came up to me and said: “Sebastian, Jon

Bon Jovi’s parents want you to join them at their table.” So I sat next to Jon’s dad and we had a great time together. Skid Row were looking for a singer at that point, and I think they were partly responsible for suggesting me for it. There was also a guy named Dave Feld, who orchestrated the sending of a cassette from Dave Sabo [guitarist] and Rachel Bolan [bassist] to me in Toronto. It had about six songs on it, and three of them ended up on the first Skid Row album.

What did you think of the tape?

I wasn’t blown away by it, cos the singer [original Skid Row vocalist Matt Fallon] sounded just like Jon Bon Jovi, and I wanted to be more metal than that. But the more I listened to *18 And Life* and *Youth Gone Wild*, the more I knew that these songs were meant for me to sing. Little did I know that we’d actually be bigger than Wrathchild [laughs]. ➤



Bach and Pantera's Dimebag Darrell at The Limelight club in London, 1993.

“Wherever we went, there’d be an ice cooler full of beer for us. We didn’t think it was bad. It was great.”

What did you make of the Skid Row guys the first time you met them?

I was really impressed that they’d paid for my plane ticket from Toronto to New Jersey – a hundred and forty-nine dollars. I thought I’d hit the big time. Eight months later, I looked at my accounting and I got charged back for that plane ticket. That’s rock’n’roll.

Rachel picked me up from the airport, and we went to Snake’s house. The whole band was there, and we immediately started drinking beer.

So then the guys take me to a bar called Mingles down the street. There was a band playing, so we jumped on the stage and started jamming a little bit. There were Budweisers involved. Snake has a recollection that I got in a fight in the club. I don’t remember that, but that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen [laughs].

Skid Row became very famous very fast. Did that scramble your brain?

I didn’t have any time to think about how I was going to handle it. A typical day in the life of Skid Row on the road opening for Bon Jovi in 1989 would be doing interviews from noon until about six, then going on stage at seven and wondering why my voice was shot. It was cos I’d be talking all day, but I didn’t realise that at the time.

Then we would get on the bus, crack open a couple of drinks, drive to the next town and repeat. We did that for the Bon Jovi *New Jersey* tour and then the Mötley Crüe *Dr. Feelgood* European tour, then the Aerosmith *Pump* tour, then the Guns N’ Roses *Use Your Illusion* tour, then our own tour with

Pantera, Soundgarden and even Nine Inch Nails opening for us.

Was Skid Row a party on wheels?

Wherever we went there’d be an ice cooler full of beer for us. You’d get in a limo to go somewhere and there’d be a cooler of beer, or you’d get off a flight to Japan and there’d be a case of beer in the van to take you from the airport. Everywhere we went there was always a case of beer. We didn’t think it was bad. It was great.

Did it ever get out of control for you personally?

Yes. I would say to anybody that cocaine is over the edge. When you start doing that drug, you’re down the path of out of control. And I did like that stuff, especially around the *Slave To The Grind* tour. Everybody was doing it. That’s the way it was in



Bach and Slash at the 1995 Monsters Of Rock festival at Castle Donington.

the eighties. The first time I ever went to [fabled Hollywood hangout] The Rainbow, people would shake my hand, and when they shook my hand they would pass me a bundle of blow. I was like: “What is this? Is this for me?” And it was free!

I can’t stand that stuff now. I haven’t touched that stuff in years. I’m not interested in the least.

You were a loose cannon back then. You got into

a public spat with Jon Bon Jovi, which was ballsy. But do you wish you’d been a bit more measured back then, maybe bit your tongue a little?

Yes I do. At the bottom of that [Bon Jovi spat], we were not happy with the contract we signed for the first record. None of the band were. But looking back, we probably would have never made it without his help. It wouldn’t have been possible.

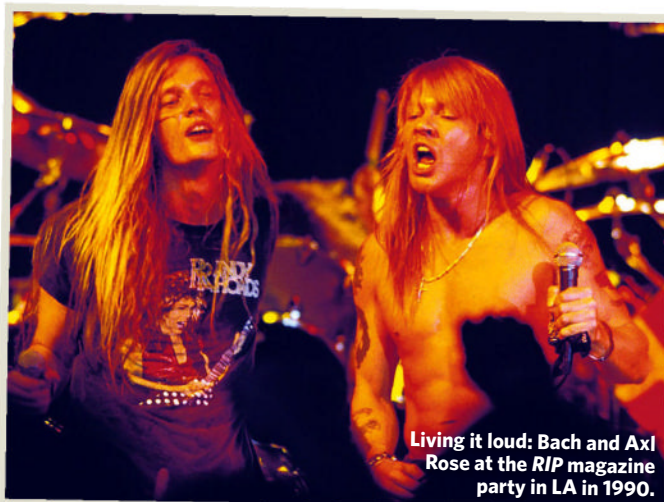
You were criticised for wearing a T-shirt saying ‘AIDS Kills Fags Dead’ in a photo in a magazine, and you were sued by a female fan who was hit in the face by a bottle you threw at a gig. What would you say now to that kid you were then.

Nothing. I’m not going to answer that question.

You wouldn’t give that kid any advice, knowing what you know now?
Next question.

Okay. You were close to the Guns N’ Roses guys around that time. How did you get to know them?

The first time I met Axl was the night we opened for Aerosmith at the Los Angeles Forum in 1989. Lonn Friend, who was the editor of *RIP* magazine, said: “Somebody’s here who wants to meet you,” and he brought Axl into my dressing room. We hit it off straight away. He’d been invited to sing *Train Kept A’ Rollin’* with Aerosmith that night, and he wanted to know if I had it



Living it loud: Bach and Axl Rose at the *RIP* magazine party in LA in 1990.



Reaching for the sky: Bach and Dave Sabo with Skid Row at Wembley Stadium, August 31, 1991.

“When you’re 19 years old, you think you know everything. And guess what? You really don’t.”

on tape so he could learn the lyrics. I did, so we played the song on this tape deck I had. We became really good friends. And I actually lived at Slash’s house for two weeks back in, like, 1990. I have no idea why. I guess we were just buddies. It was crazy.

Skid Row’s second album, *Slave To The Grind*, reached No.1 in the US. How did you celebrate? That day we were opening for Guns N’ Roses in Largo, Maryland. It was just when they’d switched from the old way of accounting for sales to Soundscan, which scanned copies as they sold. You used to have to wait a couple of months to find out, but you could tell right away. And [famed Japanese journalist] Masa Ito from *Burn!* magazine walked on to the bus going: “Bazu! Bazu!” – cos they always add a ‘u’ to my name – “Your record, number one!” I just went: “What the fuck!” Guns N’ Roses were doing a soundcheck, so I ran up to Duff [McKagan] on stage and went: “Duff, Duff, our album came out!” And he went: “What number?” “Number one!” He just didn’t understand. It was a new way of doing it.

Was there a point when you sensed things were changing for Skid Row? That maybe the end of the band was approaching?

Not so much musically, more the interpersonal stuff. I had to have my own bus, I wasn’t allowed to be on their bus. After we played Donington [the 1992 Monsters Of Rock festival], Slayer invited me on their bus back to London, which is quite the drive. That was when I was really into the blow. On that

trip I was doing mountains of coke, while Slayer were going: “This guy’s nuts.” When we got to the hotel, I was so fucked up that even Slayer wouldn’t hang out with me either.

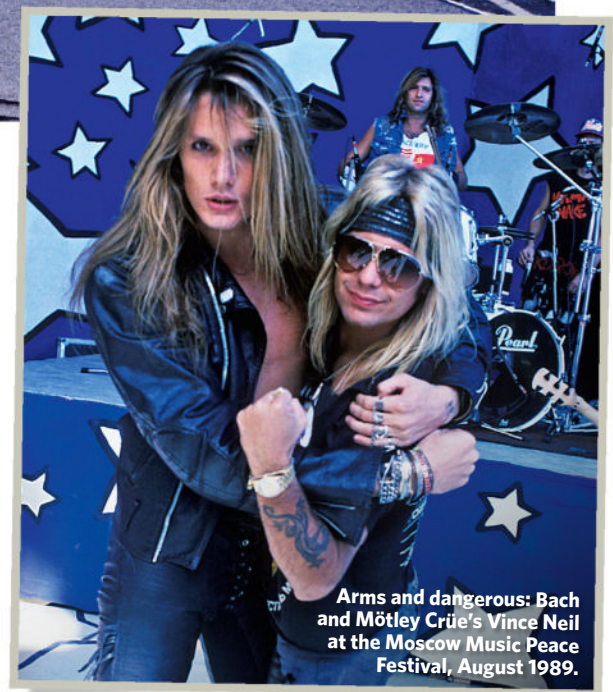
What was the issue between you and the rest of Skid Row?

Nobody likes to hang out with somebody that’s doing cocaine. If I’m in the presence of somebody doing that now, I leave the fucking room. But that was me back then.

You left Skid Row in 1996, after the *Subhuman Race* album. Were you fired?

Yes. We were offered to open up for Kiss on their 1996 reunion show, at Meadowlands in New Jersey, our home. I’m a serious Kiss fan, I couldn’t even comprehend that we could open for them at a reunion show. At the time, Rachel had a side project called Prunella Scales that he formed with our road crew – guys that I had been paying weekly for years. I get the message that Skid Row can’t play with Kiss at Meadowlands because Prunella Scales are busy. So I call Snake on the phone. He doesn’t pick up, the answering machine’s on, and I proceed to freak out: “How you could you do this to me? How could you do this to the band?” I used some rotten language, I was pissed off. Sorry, that’s what happens to human beings sometimes.

As the story goes, Snake says he has a roomful of family and friends when the message was playing. And he calls me back and goes: “Nice message. You don’t have



Arms and dangerous: Bach and Mötley Crüe’s Vince Neil at the Moscow Music Peace Festival, August 1989.

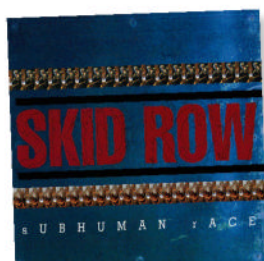
a guitar player any more.” That’s how I was informed. If he’s not my guitar player, I guess I’m out of the band.

How did you deal with being fired?

Well, I built the band with the best years of my life, and that’s no exaggeration. My mom and my aunt were visiting me from Canada. There was a bunch of snow, and I remember we were sitting there in the snow going: “How can you make it in rock’n’roll, which is a one-in-a-million thing, and then just throw it away. How is any fight more important than that?” That, to me, was just nuts. I always assumed – naively – that bands that had gold and platinum records would be like Rush, they would be together forever and ever, and release twenty-five albums. I never thought Skid Row would only release three albums.

After you left Skid Row you started a solo band. What was that like?

I started my solo band, I didn’t even know if I could do it. I was doing a lot of stupid shit





Bach (who played Riff Raff) and original cast member Tim Curry (centre) at the Halloween performance of *The Rocky Horror Show* in New York in 2001.



Bach on tour with the stage production *Jesus Christ Superstar*, playing the title role, in 2002.

"I was doing mountains of coke while Slayer were going: 'This guy's nuts.'"

back then. I would do tribute records for five hundred dollars. I was in Skid Row for so long I didn't know how to be anything else. I shouldn't have been doing all that, but at the time I didn't know what else to do.

The first album you released after leaving Skid Row wasn't a solo record, it was the debut album from *The Last Hard Men*, a bizarre supergroup featuring you plus members of The Breeders, The Smashing Pumpkins and The Frogs. What the hell was that all about? That came with Kelley Deal from The Breeders. She just had this wacky idea to form a band with those people and she wanted me to sing. She called me and said: "You're a punk!" I'm like: "What are you talking about? Do you have the right phone number?" You'd have to ask her, I don't really get it either. It's not my finest moment [laughs].

You released your debut solo album, *Bring 'Em Bach Alive*, in 1999, but then you pulled another left turn and signed up for the Broadway production of *Jekyll & Hyde*. How did that happen? Frank Wildhorn, the guy who created the show and wrote the music, said: "I want a rock star to play *Jekyll & Hyde* on Broadway." He came to Jason Flom, who had signed Skid Row to Atlantic, and Jason said: "Sebastian Bach." Jason called me at home, and I said: "What, are you fucking kidding?" But I went to see it and I loved it – the costuming, the Victorian clothing, the staging, the music.

When Broadway came along I was playing clubs – you'd show up in the afternoon, there's no bathroom, no backstage. So I was very happy to get on Broadway

and have my own dressing room and my own bathroom. I was like: "Thank the Lord!"

How do theatre people compare to rock'n'roll people?

Well, that's how I learned to drink red wine. They do the show, then when it's done then they all go to some amazing Italian restaurant in Times Square.

You also appeared in the theatre productions *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, but you didn't pursue theatre any further. Why not? You could have been the next Michael Crawford.

Ha! Well, I was asked to do some plays that I said no to. They wanted me to play the Childcatcher in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. They made me a serious offer, but it was only one song per performance, which just wasn't interesting to me. My agent called me up and said: "Are you fucking crazy?" I couldn't see myself going on the website, saying: "Hey, all you fans out there, come and see me in

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!" I'm sorry, it has to have an element of rock'n'roll for me.

You've done some acting in TV shows such as *Gilmore Girls* and *Californication*. Have you ever been offered any properly big roles in Hollywood films?

When I was in Skid Row, I got asked to be in the [Patrick Swayze/Keanu Reeves] movie *Point Break*, but for some reason the manager didn't want me to do it. They asked Skid Row to do the theme song to the movie. And when Arnold Schwarzenegger did *Terminator 2*, his first choice for the soundtrack was Skid Row's

Monkey Business! Arnold personally picked it. We had meetings, but again our management said: "No, we're not doing that." And Guns N' Roses fucking did it! But I have always wanted to be in a Marvel movie. The only problem is they fucking stink now.

Back in the early 2000s, you auditioned to be the singer with Velvet Revolver. What are your memories of that?

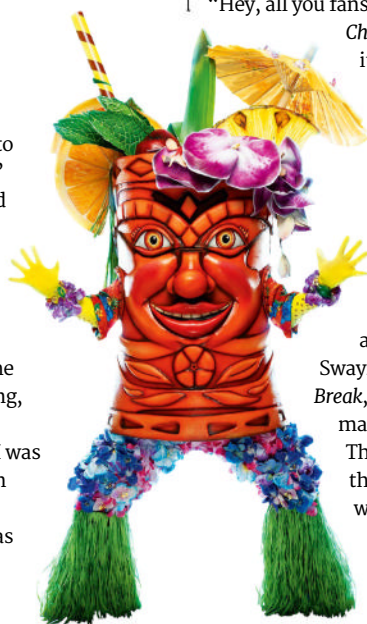
Well, I still have the tape. I went in the studio and recorded five songs that I wrote with them. That was at the time I was rehearsing for *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and I was making a good living. It was about to go on tour for six months, and I wasn't gonna quit that. They needed a guy, they couldn't wait for me, so they got Scott Weiland.

Will any of those songs ever see the light of day?

I don't listen to it much, I don't wanna drive myself crazy, but [Velvet Revolver drummer] Matt Sorum, who's my buddy, says to me: "Let's put that shit out." It's fucking heavy, man. It's heavy music. It's five songs, it could make a great EP.

You were really close to Axl at that point. There was no love lost between him and Slash. How hard was it to balance the two friendships?

I used to sit up with Axl late at night and into the next morning, talking about his grievances with his former band. Around the time, [ex-MC5 guitarist] Wayne Kramer and Slash called me. They had a benefit in New York for [upmarket menswear designer John Varvatos], and Wayne said: "I want you to sing with me and Slash at this thing." I was such friends with Axl at the time, I had to tell them on the phone: "No, I can't



So what's preventing the original Skid Row line-up from reuniting?

You've seen the Metallica movie *Some Kind Of Monster*? You've read the official Aerosmith biography, or Mötley Crüe's *The Dirt*? All of them are about the band working with a therapist to keep the band going. Every one of them. That never happened with Skid Row. Never. It was never even discussed. Every time I read one of those books, I feel like fucking throwing it against the wall, cos it's chapter after chapter about the band members not being able to see eye to eye, and hiring this dude for fifty grand a month to talk it out. Nobody ever did that for Skid Row. I guess twenty million records wasn't enough to even try. It seems to me it should happen.

Do you think it will happen?

There's no reason why not. So why not?

It's taken ten years to put out your new solo album. Will we have to wait another ten years for the next one?

I don't think so. I have a great team around me, I'm on a great label, Reigning Sound, which also has Kerry King and a bunch of other stuff. My management also manage Slayer and Ghost. And I do have a song for the next record. I'm collaborating on it with [former Guns N' Roses/Sixx AM guitarist] DJ Ashba. It's a fucking badass tune. So I got one!

When you look back at your career, what would have done differently?

Well, this answers something you asked before that I did not answer. I started so young that I was playing in arenas when I was, like, nineteen years old. I was coming from the streets, from the clubs. I did not grasp that playing for twenty thousand people you have to be more focused on your message that you're sending out, that you're setting an example for kids in the audience. You don't want to hurt anyone. That's what I would do different. But I was nineteen years old, and when you're nineteen years old you think you know everything. And guess what? You really don't.

All of this has made for a spectacularly interesting life, but has your music taken a back seat because of it?

Not recently, no. Maybe at periods, definitely. When I was on Broadway for six months I didn't have any time to do anything else. My agency at the time were great at getting me on TV shows, but not so good at lining up rock tours. But it's all different now. My agents have got me touring all fucking year. It's all rock'n'roll now, brother! 🤘

Child Within The Man is out on May 10 via Reigning Phoenix Music.

Bach at the Heavy Montreal festival in Montreal, Canada, August 6, 2016.

do it. I don't want to piss off Axl." And of course Wayne Kramer is no longer with us, and I really wish I'd done it.

In 2011 your house in New Jersey was destroyed by Hurricane Irene. That must have been hugely traumatic for you.

It could not have been more traumatic. I don't even know how to put it into words. I was opening for Twisted Sister and Godsmack in... I think it was Idaho. I came off stage and it was like: "Dude, this is really bad. Your house is destroyed, your kids were evacuated." I got so drunk that they barely let me on the plane to fly back. The house was condemned, so they wouldn't let me in. I went: "Dude, all the fucking stuff that I own is in there." They looked at me and went: "You know what? Go in there, but you didn't get permission from us." That's what the song *Everybody Bleeds* is about. It doesn't matter what your political affiliation is, what race you are, how rich or poor you are, the Earth is our only home, and if we don't do something to save it we're all fucked.

On a lighter note, in 2023 you were 'Tiki' in the American version of *The Masked Singer*. What was that experience like?

It was great. I did pretty good. I progressed through the episodes, I beat some guys in challenges and sing-offs. You wanna have a fucking sing-off with me, you better be fucking warmed up.

But you're a professional singer. Shouldn't you have won?

Well, I lost to Macy Gray. And, you know, the show

is pretty much R&B-themed – I don't think they wanted a heavy-metal rocker to take over the show. I did Elton John's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, I did Kiss's *I Was Made For Lovin' You*, I did Lady Gaga's *Monster*, and I scream my nuts off. You go watch it, you tell me who won!

Is there part of you that wishes you'd made more records than you have done?

No, because I only make them when I have the songs to make them. The only way I would be

"I do wish that the original Skid Row could put aside our differences and make another record, definitely."

sorry about that is if I had a bunch of songs lying around. But they're all out there. I do wish that the original Skid Row could put aside our differences and make another record, definitely. Because we're still alive. I just had [former Skid Row drummer] Rob Affuso in the video [for the album's first single, *What Do I Got To Lose?*]. I kept saying: "Dude, this is so cool." You can feel the chemistry. Imagine the chemistry if all five of us were together. It would be crazy. It would just be like seeing Guns N' Roses getting back together. Look at Slayer. If you read their interviews, they hate each other's guts. But now they're back together.



Bach and Rush's Geddy Lee at the film premiere of *Rush: Beyond The Lighted Stage* in 2010.





BACK IN BLACK

As pack leaders of the post-millennial alt.blues scene - until fame turned their hair grey - **The Black Keys** have reignited their mojo on twelfth album *Ohio Players*.

Words: **Henry Yates**



"We're gonna need a bigger van." Carney and Auerbach at Epitaph Records in LA, 2003.



Dan Auerbach (left) and Patrick Carney receive Grammys for Best Rock Performance By A Duo Or Group With Vocals, for *Tighten Up*, and Best Alternative Music Album, for *Brothers*, in 2011.



The Black Keys whip up a storm in 2007.

Being the biggest band in the world is overrated, reckons Black Keys frontman Dan Auerbach. Being the happiest one is where it's at, offers drummer Patrick Carney. The Ohio alt. blues duo speak from hard-won experience. Now, a decade down the road from their four-year run of platinum sales, Grammy awards, burnout and premature greying (we'll get to all that), twelfth album *Ohio Players* is the sound of rock stars enjoying their jobs again.

"There's this thing that happens when you become a middle-aged rock'n'roller," says Carney. "You're supposed to become this kind of sullen, introspective, depressive person. But Dan and I, we had this kind of 'aha!' moment. We realised we needed to go and do some fun shit together, and it'll come through on the record. Like, let's do all the things that twenty years from now we're gonna want to remember. We can do all this bullshit, and no one is gonna suggest it to us."

Featuring hook-ups with friends and heroes – from Beck to Noel Gallagher – recorded in studios around the world, and with the pair breaking up the sessions by spinning vinyl at raucous DJ parties and hanging out together at ritzy hotels, *Ohio Players* is a record with joy in the grooves. To check its pulse, try lead single *Beautiful People (Stay High)*, a spring-heeled hit of gritty white-boy soul. Or *This Is Nowhere*, a driving dirty-funk gem that practically orders you onto the dancefloor.

"That's the true test," says Auerbach. "Y'know, you think you've got a good record, then you play it on the dancefloor and it's a fucking

"I think we set it [their had-it van] on fire and pushed it into the woods. That's a rock'n'roll van burial."

Dan Auerbach

stinker. At our DJ shows, we were getting so picky about what we were spinning, and then that kind of trickled over into the making of this record. Like, it's got to feel like a hit that you've never heard before, or it's not good enough."

Auerbach and Carney choose to do today's Zoom calls without webcams, but scanning their press shots it's striking how similar they now look – both mid-forties men in thick-rimmed, Clark Kent spectacles, equally awkward in front of the camera. It's strange, because the story goes that they couldn't have been more poles-apart when they fell into each other's orbit at Akron's Firestone High School in the mid-90s.

"I was sporty, Pat was in bands and shit, he was definitely extra-quirky," says Auerbach. He laughs at a memory: "I remember

walking past Pat one day and he had his head shaved, with these Buddy Holly glasses on, and he was just dragging his head along the lockers. It was making this sound, like, 'RRRRRRRR!'"

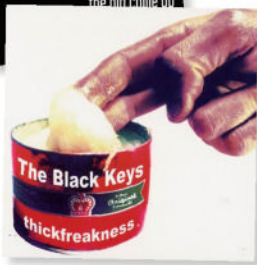
Never mind appearances, back then Auerbach and Carney came from very different shades of the musical spectrum. Guitarist Auerbach came from an artsy background, and found himself pulled in by the rough diamonds in his dad's blues vinyl. Around the same time, the Mississippi-based Fat Possum record label sparked an obsession with warts-and-all bluesmen like R.L. Burnside, Junior Kimbrough and T-Model Ford.

"I loved the aesthetic of those records," he says today. "I loved the fucking irreverent way they were recorded. I loved the stories, the lives these people lived. These weren't old blues records and they weren't dead guys. These were guys who were alive, and they were coming to Cleveland, playing the rock clubs. So I was intrigued beyond belief.

I would drive for twenty-four hours just to see them play. The only person I didn't see was Junior, because he was sick. I tried. I drove to Mississippi just to see him – sixteen hours – but I didn't know he'd just had his leg amputated."

When I interviewed Carney in 2011, told me he "hated" blues as a young man. Today he's more measured: "If you look at the Venn diagram, Dan and I were coming to the same thing from different angles. I was into Beck and alternative rock like Modest Mouse, Pavement and Jon Spencer Blues Explosion – the *Orange* record [1994] specifically. Then the Blues Explosion made *A Ass Pocket Of Whiskey* [1996] with this guy R.L. Burnside, who I'd never heard of. That was the gateway drug. And that was right around the time Dan came to my house for the first time."

The pair's kid brothers had convinced them to jam. "I'd lied about my age to get a job washing dishes and was making five bucks an hour," says



Carney. “So I bought a 150-dollar drum set, a bass and a four-track recorder, all the gear you need to start a band. I’d never had a drum lesson, but I could do a stupid little surf beat. The only time I played drums was when someone came over who was better at guitar than me. When Dan plugged in his little Peavey amp, it was clear. Instantly, he had these blues licks and I was floored. Then I saw him play in this bar band, The Barnburners. The other guys were kind of dorks. But his voice and guitar playing were fucking phenomenal. I was like: ‘Shit, we could do something cool together.’”

If you’d been at those earliest Black Keys shows of 2001 – and, let’s be honest, there was no competition for tickets – you’d have heard the first stirrings of the raggedy push-and-pull that marked this band out in a post-millennial market already dominated by glossy, quantised pop.

“I swear to God,” admits Carney, “I didn’t realise the drums were meant to be even-keeled, tempo-wise, until we started working with [producer] Danger Mouse on 2008’s *Attack & Release*. It never even crossed my mind. To me it was very fluid, and where the one, two, three and four [beats] landed seemed completely irrelevant, because it was just Dan and I, and we had this way of playing together where it could move like that.”

Inevitably, there were hard years in which Auerbach recalls the duo enduring “all manner of fuckery, driving through snowstorms, getting caught in lightning”. Even at their brokest, for years the Keys resisted licensing their music for corporate use – until they didn’t (it’s said their catalogue has featured in more than 300 films, TV shows, videogames and adverts). “I don’t even want to pretend like I know how this business fully operates,” shrugs the guitarist, who today runs the Easy Eye Sound record label. “Pat, on the other hand, is very talented at the business of music.”

Sometimes lazily dismissed as a poor man’s White Stripes (including by Jack White himself), early Keys records like 2002’s *The Big Come Up*, 2003’s *Thickfreakness*, 2004’s *Rubber Factory* – literally recorded at an abandoned tyre manufacturing plant – and 2006’s *Magic Potion* sold comparatively. But two years later, *Attack & Release* made US No.14, and they were ready to step up when their ratty old 1994 Chrysler van finally choked. “I think we probably set it on fire and pushed it into the woods,” says Auerbach. “That’s a rock’n’roll van burial.”

Everything changed in 2010. The most tangible departure was the band’s relocation to Nashville. “In Akron, we were truly isolated,” reasons Auerbach. “I mean, we didn’t want to be a duo. At the start we had a guy playing bass, and he quit. He just stopped coming to practice. The reality of Nashville is that there’s an influx of people, and a lot of them are douchebags but a lot of them are not.

“This city allows me to live in a bubble,” Auerbach continues, “where I get to have my studio and cherry-pick all the city’s musical



Life isn't so black-and-white: The Black Keys in 2019



attributes. Y’know, if I need an engineer, there’s six thousand Pro Tools engineers in town. Or a string section,

horns, pedal steel, songwriters – this town is full of them. I miss Ohio, the parks and the weather and my family. But it’s a hard place to park your money. I’ve owned a house there for fifteen years and it’s worth less than it was when I fucking bought it.”

By coincidence or design, with the move to Nashville came 2010’s more ambitious-sounding *Brothers*, the platinum-selling sixth album that

international tour diary (“We’ve been touring long enough to know when we’re about to hit our breaking point,” Carney said at the time). When they returned to the treadmill, both men grew fractious and homesick.

“My hair went grey during all that,” Carney says of those peak years. “I think every band that goes through a period like that, they end up having a struggle afterwards. It ultimately leads to bands breaking up and people killing themselves. I think it would have been very helpful if any musician who had been through it had given us a phone call, saying: ‘It’s okay to say no to stuff.’

But no one did. There was no guidance. No mentorship. No one to say: ‘Hey, slow down and make sure you’re having fun.’ In fact, you’re gonna get shit for doing that. So we were just like: ‘What the fuck is going on?’”

If you want to see how bad things got, the drummer adds, you should watch the band’s recently released documentary

(the cunningly titled *This Is A Film About The Black Keys*). “There’s a lot of hairy moments. There’s one scene where it’s the beginning of the *El Camino* tour. It’s our first real headline arena show in the US – or anywhere. Dan doesn’t come to soundcheck and I’m just fucking losing it.”

What was it about that period that messed with your heads?

“Every morning,” Carney remembers, “it was like: ‘You’re playing the biggest show of your life today.’ For a year straight. I think if you’re a band that ascends quickly into huge shows, you ➤

|||||

“We could have just fking fell on our faces. We were taking creative risks with this record.”**

Pat Carney

includes some of the Keys’ best-loved tunes, including *Tighten Up*’s dog-whistle chop and the juddering jackboot stomp of *Howlin’ For You*. By the following year, they’d struck back with the equally hooky *El Camino* (it’s inconceivable that you haven’t heard the barbed-wire riffing of *Lonely Boy*, and the crazed fairground organ of *Gold On The Ceiling* will likely ring a bell, too, from the ad for Cobra beer).

But with global hits came live obligations, and it didn’t take long for the workload to take its toll. In early 2011, the band crossed out reams of their



Fun in the sun: Dan Auerbach and Pat Carney (right) with The Black Keys at the I-Days Festival in Milan, Italy in 2023.



don't have the perspective to be freaked out by it. But we definitely had the perspective. Like: 'Fuck, we're headlining Coachella?' By that point we'd already played Coachella five times, so it carried a lot of weight."

"The problem was always overworking ourselves," says Auerbach. "We were on the road too long. Running ourselves ragged. Gone from my daughter. And no one was gonna tell us to take a break. No one had our best interests in mind. It took us twenty years, but we finally found out; we don't need to play every city, all the time."

The duo released one last mega-hit – 2014's US chart-topping *Turn Blue* – before tapping out to write, produce and guest for other artists, among other backroom roles. By the time the next Black Keys record arrived, 2019's *Let's Rock*, the circus had moved on, but Auerbach and Carney had their heads straight. Since then their work rate has ramped up again (they average a studio album a year), but these late-period releases feel more like an outpouring of creative energy than like a contractual obligation. "I'm addicted to it," Auerbach admits.

Which leads us back to *Ohio Players*: a collection of tracks that have all the momentum of a garage-recorded first record, not an apparently pretty expensive twelfth

one. "We spent more time on *Ohio Players* than we did on *Brothers*, *El Camino* and *Turn Blue* combined," says Carney. "We ended up with close to thirty songs, like, done-done. But then we started pulling off any song that felt a little too mid-tempo or sad, putting them in the vault. Like: 'This is not what we want right now.'"

"Every morning it was like: 'You're playing the biggest show of your life today.' For a year straight."

Pat Carney

As for material that moves from string-draped soul covers (*I Forgot To Be Your Lover*) to the stalking synths of *Everytime You Leave* – not to mention the glam/rap of *Candy And Her Friends* – Auerbach says they just followed their noses.

"We were raised on so much different music, we couldn't possibly just do one style. I mean, I was brought up in a household that had bluegrass, Motown, Stax. But then at school there was rap and grunge. We just wanted to be carried away with the joy of creation in the studio. We didn't want it to be rigid or pretend that you have to conform to some sort of box."

Likewise, says Carney, the duo relaxed their policy of a skeleton staff. "Before,

I think we kept The Black Keys pretty insular. But with *Dropout Boogie* [2022], we were like: 'Shit, we have so many fucking friends that we can make music with.' That changed the whole feeling on this record, too, rather than just us in the studio, grinding away. So we set our sights on Noel Gallagher and we flew to London – even though Dan hates to fly – and our whole MO was we're gonna stay in the nicest hotel, have a bunch of fun together, then go into the studio with a rock legend, with zero material, and risk completely embarrassing ourselves."

"We ended up calling Noel the Chord Lord, because he just would not stop until he was satisfied," Auerbach picks up. "We wrote *On The Game* together, and basically, the CliffsNotes [study guide] on that song would be that everyone's a whore for something. Pat and I were like: 'On The Game? What does that mean?' We didn't know that phrase. And Noel was like: 'It's a prostitute, man'."

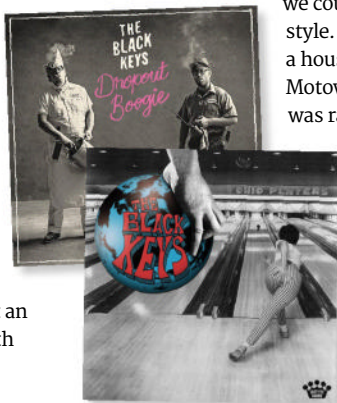
It was on the flight home that the pair realised they'd pulled off not just the collaboration with the ex-Oasis leader, but also arguably the boldest album of their career.

"It was fucking stressful afterwards, thinking about what could have happened, and how we could have just fucking fell on our faces," says Carney. "But that's the whole thing with *Ohio Players* – it's like, we were taking creative risks with this record."

There is perhaps just one sticking point. These new tunes are so hooky, so immediate, so danceable. Aren't you worried they'll turn you into the biggest band in the world all over again?

"I don't know if the world needs a couple of mid-forties guys to do that," reasons Carney. "But we want this record to resonate with bands. It's really about demonstrating to younger bands that you can still be doing this in your forties and having fun. I didn't see that when I was in my twenties and thirties. If I'd had a band to look at, then maybe when we were going through our peak it wouldn't have felt so frantic, like, 'This is our moment, and it's just downhill from here.' It's not about getting a Grammy or selling out multiple nights at an arena. It's about making something you're really proud of." ●

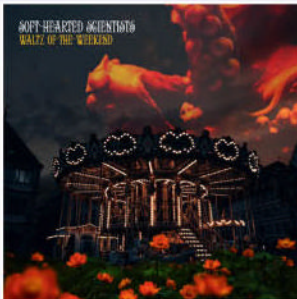
Ohio Players is out now via *Nonesuch*.





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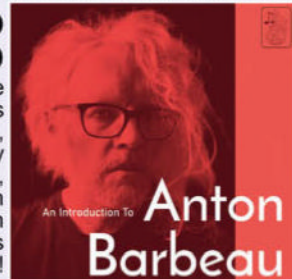


AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HONEY POT with CRYSTAL JACQUELINE CD

Once described as Fruits de Mer's 'house band', The Honey Pot have compiled a lovely collection of tracks recorded for the label over the years - including covers and original songs - plus three recordings available here for the first time, including a storming live version of 'White Rabbit'

AN INTRODUCTION TO ANTON BARBEAU CD

Ant has been a great supporter over the years and we've pulled together this retrospective of some of his contributions, including covers of songs originally recorded by Big Star, Julian Cope, Traffic, David Bowie, Robyn Hitchcock, Donovan and The Monkees, as well as his own songs; including a tribute to Cardigan's Cellar Bar, Fruits de Mer's second home!



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GOING MY WAY

From aspiring band guy to multi-faceted solo superstar, **Lenny Kravitz** has worked with some of rock's greatest. On his new album, he's revisiting his youth.

Words: **Niall Doherty** Portrait: **Mark Seliger**

Lenny Kravitz says that when you've had a career stretching over three and a half decades, you learn to accept that your fortunes will shift every now and then. "The surf changes," says the singer, guitarist and producer (and actor, fashion designer, author and design mogul), aptly looking out over the Pacific from his pad in Malibu, Los Angeles on a slightly gloomy February morning. "You're riding little waves, then you're riding moderate waves, then, oh wow, you've caught a huge one. Throughout a career of thirty-five years it goes up, down, every which direction."

It has been a life of forward-facing restlessness for the now 59-year-old Kravitz, who emerged with the swaggering soul-funk of *Let Love Rule* in 1989, and went supernova with the jubilant rock'n'roll grooves of his third album, 1993's *Are You Gonna Go My Way*. There has been little room for glancing back over eight records since, but Kravitz found himself in contemplative mood while making *Blue Electric Light*, his twelfth album (out on May 24). Prompted by the experience of revisiting his youth for his 2020 memoir, also titled *Let Love Rule*, it sees Kravitz imbue his sound with the synth-pop flourishes he obsessed over as a teen. Recorded at his studio in the Bahamas, the country where he normally resides, it captures Kravitz savouring what he sees as another big momentum shift on the horizon. "I feel as though I'm back in that magnitude of a wave and I'm enjoying every moment, because I did not take it in the first time," he says. Life is good, he says, settling in for a career-spanning chat with *Classic Rock*. And why wouldn't it be? He's Lenny Kravitz.

Where was your head at when you started working on *Blue Electric Light*?

This record very much reflects my musical expression at the time I was in high school, and I think that's because I had written a book [*Let Love Rule*]. In this book I spent a lot of time going through my teenage years. It's not a time I spent a lot of time thinking about or reminiscing on, and I went back and thought

about how I was making music then, the way I was doing it. There's even two songs on the record, *Bundle Of Joy* and *Heaven*, that are from that time. So it's a real celebration of right now and that time.

What was it like getting back in touch with high school?

It was great, it was fun, and that's something I appreciate. It took me back to that time. All the other songs are new, but with those two songs I was transcribing off of a really bad cassette that sounded like shit. It was hard to listen to because it was muffled, warbly. It was an old cassette. But I studied it.

Where had the cassette been sitting all these years?

It had been lost. A friend of mine found it because I'd given him one back in the day and he found it. So it was all meant to be. The fact it was found after a million years and sent to me was very cool.

Who were your main influences at the time you made that old demo?

In high school, Bowie, Prince, a lot of the eighties stuff, The Police, Rick James.

And to think that within a few years, some of those artists went from being

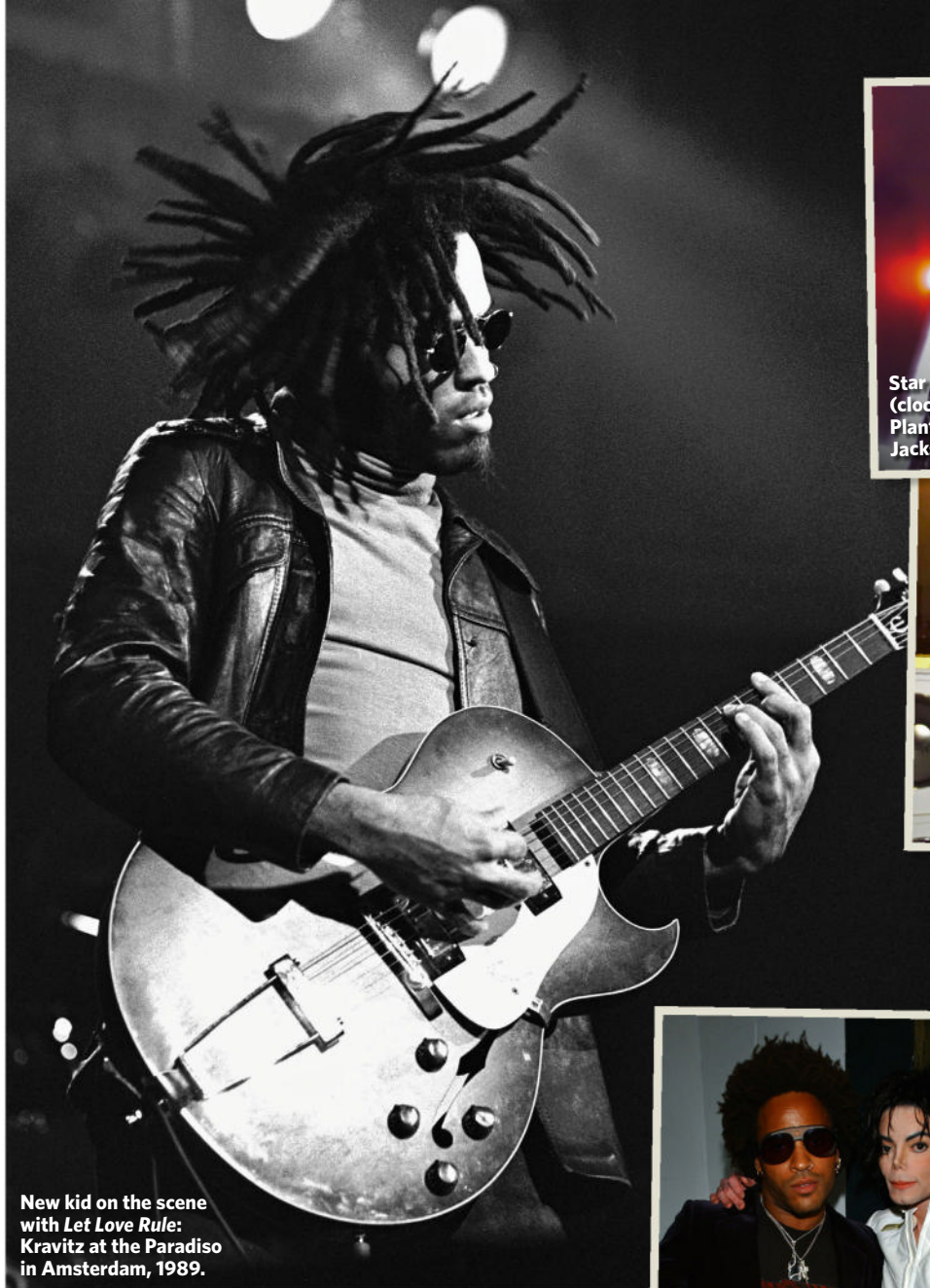
your heroes to being collaborators.

Yeah. Interestingly enough, I was fortunate enough to work with Michael Jackson, work with Bowie, work with Prince.

When you look back to that initial burst of success, what are the first things that come to mind?

I'm extremely grateful. I wanted to make music badly from the time I was a child. It was never about stardom, it was about making music. I never imagined being the frontman, I was always cool being the guitar player or the drummer or the bass player. I was not the lead singer in any of the groups or things I was doing during that time, I was the guy next to the guy. I didn't want to be a solo artist, I wanted to be in a band, I wanted to have other ➤





New kid on the scene with *Let Love Rule*: Kravitz at the Paradiso in Amsterdam, 1989.



Star attraction: Kravitz with (clockwise) Mick Jagger, Robert Plant, David Bowie, Michael Jackson and Eric Clapton.



and find your way out of that corner. My way out was running. I needed this, but my soul wouldn't allow me to do it because it knew that something was coming before I knew that something was coming. If I had taken those deals at that time, I guarantee I would not be sitting talking to you right now.

When did you feel vindicated?

After the first two or three albums. When I made *Let Love Rule*, I didn't know I was going to make another one. A lot of people come out with one album and then they go away, or they put out a second one and it flopped and then you're done. But I guess after *Are You Gonna Go My Way* I was like: "Wow, this is really happening."

At that point it felt like one of those rare meteoric rises that happens to only a few artists each decade. What was it like being in the middle of it all?

It was magic. It was like being in the middle of a storm. Things were crazy, everything was spinning around me. I was all over the place. I was a kid in the middle of all this madness. But the creativity always came first, the record making, the touring. That was always what was important to me. And the whole circus of a life was happening around me by virtue of being successful. There was a lot going on.

In 1993 alone you collaborated with Mick Jagger, David Bowie, John Paul Jones and Curtis Mayfield, among others. Why do you think you were embraced by so many of your heroes?

I'm grateful for that. I fought the critics for years. Not that it's about what the critics think, but I got it pretty hard. But at the same time, whether it's Michael Jackson or Prince or Curtis Mayfield or Eric Clapton or Robert Plant, they all wanted to hang out, they all wanted to go on tour or come on stage and jam or go into the studio, or whatever, the folks that educated me and gave

"Here I am with Michael Jackson, teaching him my song and telling him how to do it."

people there, I wanted to have this experience in the studio that I'd seen in documentaries about bands that looked so much fun. The fact I ended up doing this primarily by myself, and not having that experience, and being the lead singer and the frontman and it worked, was amazing to me.

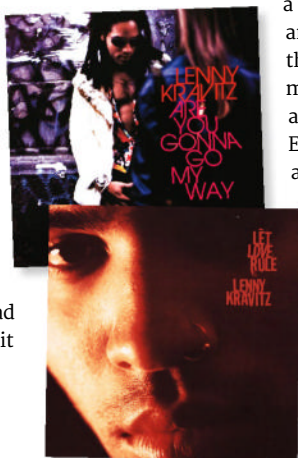
When did you accept: "Oh, right, looks like I'm a solo artist, then"?

Let Love Rule, that was it. Before that, man, I was doing things, making demos, in some different bands, but I was hopping round from project to project. In fact I was in a band – and it was my first time being the lead singer – that was offered a deal. But *Let Love Rule* had just come to me and I had to turn it down. I told them I couldn't do it. I didn't have a record deal, but I'd

found my sound and I was committing to doing that – giving up money or opportunity for success. I always did that, always followed my gut.

Where did that ability to take a leap of faith come from?

I have no idea. Because think about it – I'm a teenager on the lot of A&M Records, and I'm being offered a deal, but they're telling me that I have to change my music, and they're gonna give me all this money and "You're gonna go to Europe!" and "You're gonna make a record" and "You're gonna be a star!" blah blah blah, and I'm going along with it. But then when it got time to sign the deal, I had this uncomfortable feeling inside of me. I felt like an animal trapped in a corner – you're either gonna get taken over, killed and devoured, or you're gonna fight





Kravitz, with daughter Zoë at a ceremony honouring him with a star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame in 2024.



Downtime at home in the Bahamas.

me inspiration all showed up. It was very strange.

Who gave you the best advice?

Robert Plant. He opened for me in 1993. He'd put out a solo record and he wanted to expose himself to a younger audience, and he chose me. This obviously didn't come from me! So he came on the tour. And Led Zeppelin means everything to me, Robert means everything to me, as a voice, as a writer, as a force. We became friendly. During this time I was very serious. Sound is very important to me, and when the sound is not right it drives me mad. I was doing a soundcheck, and I guess I was in a bit of a mood because I didn't like the way the stage sounded that night, and Robert ripped into me and tore me apart, basically saying: "The fuck is wrong with you? You're in the middle of this great success, you have this music, you're having a great run and you should be enjoying every moment. Let go, relax!"

He was yelling at me like he was my older brother or my dad or something! It freaked me out and I was a little embarrassed. Here was one my heroes telling me what a bitch I'm being. But it was the most beautiful thing, because he's a real guy and he saw me in this wonderful place that he's been, and he said: "You better fucking wake up and enjoy this and have fun." And that turned me around. We've been great friends ever since.

Well if you're going to be told off by someone, it might as well be Robert Plant. Later in your career you did a song with Michael Jackson, and

got Dave Grohl to drum. Dave later told *Classic Rock* he couldn't recognise himself on the finished track.

He's in there! He and I had a whole thing about that, because he thought he wasn't in there as loud as he should have been. I mixed it in the way I know Michael would've done with the samples and the drums. Michael was working on the *Invincible* album at that time and called me in to do a track. I cut the track at Marvin Gaye's studio in LA, and Michael loved working there. Michael showed up and had me teach him the song and produce him, and it was really surreal to be in there with the actual one person that started this whole thing for me as a child. I went to see the Jackson 5 when I was six years old, and here I am with him, teaching him my song and telling him how to do it. He said: "You stop me every time I don't do it the way I intended it." We had fun. He was so human. We

laughed a lot. Later, I'd sent it to Grohl to add some real drums to the samples, which I put in there and which sound great.

I'm not happy the song ended up on [posthumous 2010 release] *Michael*. There was a lot of bullshit on that album. But it's a song and a memory that is very meaningful to me.

Looking back across your career, what's your proudest achievement?

The success and life of my daughter [*Batman* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* actor and model Zoë Kravitz] as a human being, not what she does. What she does is part of it, and that's wonderful.

Not because she 'made it', but the exceptional human being that she is and that I had something to do with that is my greatest achievement. 🙏



Blue Electric Light is out on May 24 via *Roxie/BMG*.

WATCHING THE RIVER FLOW

Most thought 1994's *The Division Bell* was **Pink Floyd's** final statement. But after sifting through surplus material, 20 years later, with a little help from his friends, David Gilmour pulled *The Endless River* out of the hat.

Words: **Daryl Easlea**

"It comes from all sorts of ideas," David Gilmour said in 2014, of Pink Floyd's then-new album *The Endless River*. "Some of it is improvised, quite a bit of it is just the two of us, Rick [Wright] and me, or the three of us, improvising together. Some of it is half-written ideas that one of us had come up with, rehearsed and considered as a start point for something."

Those ideas often came about on the Astoria, Gilmour's houseboat moored on the River Thames in West London. It was also there, in 2012, that engineer Andy Jackson, who had worked with Floyd and Gilmour since 1980, learned there was to be a new Pink Floyd album, some 20 years after they had last released fresh material, and after years of Gilmour saying "absolutely, definitely not".

It was no secret that there was a surplus of material from the sessions that produced 1994's *The Division Bell*. Due to the amount, at one point it had been envisaged as a double, with one disc of tracks with vocals and the other built from the instrumental sessions that began at Floyd's Britannia Row studios and continued on the Astoria in early 1993. All featured Gilmour, drummer Nick Mason and keyboard player Rick Wright. The purpose of these sessions was to create ideas for songs.

"After two weeks we had taped an extraordinary collection of riffs, patterns and musical doodles," Nick Mason wrote in his book *Inside Out: A Personal History Of Pink Floyd*. "Some rather similar, some nearly identifiable as old songs of ours, some clearly subliminal reinventions of well-known songs."

From these, around 40 workable ideas emerged. As *The Division Bell* took shape, it became clear that there would be no time to fashion these instrumentals into an album. As a result, the recordings languished.

The Division Bell was released in March 1994, and many thought that it marked the end for Pink Floyd. After the

subsequent tour, while the band never officially disbanded, there was silence on the Floyd front. Then with Wright's passing in 2008, it seemed that Pink Floyd had been laid to rest.

While working on new material on the Astoria in 2012, Gilmour thought about the wealth of unreleased material from *The Division Bell* sessions, and wondered if anything could be done with it. He called up his old friend, Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera, and asked him to have a listen.

With Andy Jackson and long-serving engineer Damon Iddins, Manzanera divided the raw material into four sections, moving parts around.

"In the back of my mind, I like to think conceptually and

contextually, at the same time as picking the bits I like, weighing it all up – all those aspects of a big picture. There were things like Rick playing his Farfisa Compact Duo [organ] that he hadn't played since *Wish You Were Here*, and the sounds that he had used at Pompeii.

I thought this sequence would be great with a bit of drums

underneath it, so I took drums from somewhere else and put them under that, and I started to take diabolical liberties – I took a guitar solo from another track, changed the key and put it on another bit of instrumental."

After six weeks, Manzanera had four 14-minute sections, which he shared with Gilmour. "He asked me to play it to Nick, who also thought there was potential. And then... nothing happened for nine months."

At the end of that hiatus, Gilmour still couldn't work out what should happen with these pieces of music. "He felt it needed a bit of a fresh input," Manzanera told us. Gilmour rang up his old acquaintance Youth, a producer and Killing Joke's bassist. He was a huge>>

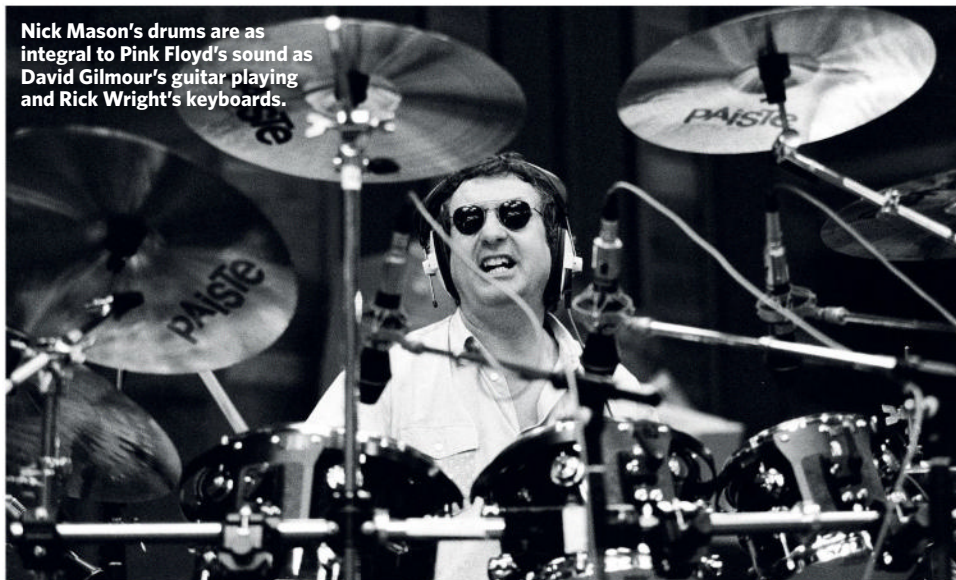
**"After two weeks we had
taped an extraordinary
collection of riffs, patterns
and musical doodles."**

Nick Mason





Key man: the greatly missed Rick Wright.



Nick Mason's drums are as integral to Pink Floyd's sound as David Gilmour's guitar playing and Rick Wright's keyboards.

“David has a unique, fantastic sound – the minute you hear it, you know it’s Pink Floyd.”

Phil Manzanera

Floyd fan as well, and was rumoured to have released some ambient mixes of Floyd’s work to the underground at the time.

Speaking ahead of its eventual release, Youth recalled vividly his first listen to the material: “David asked me to come down to his farmhouse as he wanted to play me something that he was a bit stuck with, to see what I thought. It was a glorious summer’s day. The window was open and I was looking out over this beautiful Arcadian country landscape; swifts were darting in and out of the window, chirping away. David started playing what was the genesis of *The Endless River*. Three or four minutes in, I thought: ‘That’s Rick! This is Floyd.’ I was so blown away that I thought, ‘Whatever the gig is, even if I don’t get it, I’ll never forget this moment.’ I really enjoyed it. At the same time, I could see why David may have felt that it wasn’t right. When it finished, I said: ‘That’s Pink Floyd, isn’t it?’” Gilmour replied simply: “Yes.”

Enthused and honoured to be consulted, Youth suggested he take the pieces away to his studio in Spain to rearrange them, to aid their flow. “My parting words to David were: ‘What’s your real vision on this?’” Youth remembered. “He replied: ‘Make it sound like us.’”

Youth was a student of the group’s work and history and, like Manzanera, wanted to create something that he, as a fan, would want to listen to. Apart from this, he had an outsider’s approach.

“Phil was almost too respectful to the original sessions, which was probably the right and proper thing to do at that time,” Youth suggested. “I had a really fresh perspective. I was a bit younger and cheekier – I went in and radically rearranged it. I might take four bars and turn it into a three-minute piece.”

Youth put some ideas down on bass and guitar on the tracks to illustrate their potential. “It was very risky of me to do that, because I was worried that David might think I had gone too far. But what I’ve learned as a producer is that you have to be true to yourself. Luckily, David really liked it.”

“David gave Youth what is now the first and second part, to see where he could go with that,” Jackson recalled.

“With the first section in particular, he made significant impact, saying it could be massively expanded. He extended it and put a rhythmic basis in it. Because he thought those two pieces should make an album, he

made them enormously long, not realising there were another two. We ended up lobbing out whole chunks.”

Youth was particularly taken with Manzanera’s accompanying information: “It was true prog-style – little flow charts and drawings to illustrate the concepts. I thought this was great. All the elements were juxtaposed to each other. And it wasn’t all ambient, either, there were quite a few rocky and jazzy interludes.”

“Although I only used Pink Floyd bits,” Manzanera said, “Youth made it more obviously Pink Floyd.”

After Youth’s work, everybody listened to the new creation. “And it was then that David took control of the situation,” Manzanera said. “David took the best from Youth’s work and mine. He was then in charge.”

It was this shift in gear that really got the process under way, in November 2013. Gilmour wanted only an embellishment to enhance the material. “A lot of those moments are so lovely, so magic, as they are, that we have just used those and enhanced them a little bit,” he explained.

Operations moved to Gilmour’s studio in Hove. “We headed down there and got Nick to recreate drums and David to add guitar parts,” Andy Jackson recalled. “It became an interactive process after that.”

“It was fun, but it was pretty tough,” Youth added. “Pink Floyd’s criteria is way above the clouds. Attempting to scale that mountain is no quiet endeavour, it’s a huge, epic undertaking.”

“It was great,” Manzanera continued. “There was a lot of new stuff added to the old stuff. Because of the way technology has changed, it makes it something that couldn’t have been done before. It is very much a modern album in that sense, because it does have all the ingredients of analogue recording, of people playing together, but then with today’s computer technology you can completely rearrange it, change the key of it and fashion something that’s very cohesive.”

“Modern technology is a wonderful thing in a recording studio,” Gilmour added, smiling.

“There are ideas there that can be seen in some of the really early albums, in terms of assembly of music, that is not in terms of regular song format,” said Mason. “This record that is primarily instrumental, the obvious interpretation is that it is about music primarily, rather than lyrics.”

Initially, all four producers were involved in the studio, Jackson engineering while Manzanera and Youth would be at the back, giving Gilmour and the other artists – sax player Gilad Atzmon and long-time cohort bassist Guy Pratt both make cameos – feedback and encouragement.

“It wasn’t all plain sailing,” Youth recalled.

“We had serious disagreements at times about content, the validity of doing one part or not, but it was undertaken with a lot of integrity.”

Youth spoke of the sessions with childlike wonder. “*Wish You Were Here* is probably my favourite album, certainly the one I’ve bought the most and listened to the most. Actually being in the room with the same instruments and some of the same musicians... I thought [it] would never have





"Hmm... which guitar shall I use?"
David Gilmour during sessions
for *The Division Bell* in 1993.

been possible, never considered it. Or that I'd be in a position to be considered to do anything like that – and then to be doing it is a remarkable, levelling experience. Pink Floyd's production criteria are still the highest yardstick out there – probably only George Martin comes near."

It was soon apparent – although according to all, unspoken – that the album was a tribute to Rick Wright and how much his quiet presence was as much a shaper of Floyd's sound as any of the other parts.

"As we know, lead guitarists can obliterate everybody else with their sound," Manzanera says, laughing. "And, as we know, David has a unique, fantastic sound – the minute you hear it, you know it's Pink Floyd. But having that Rick organ underneath puts it in a wonderful musical context, and the three of them, when they are together, it sounds like Pink Floyd."

"If you were short of a great guitar or drum part, you could do something about that," Jackson said. "But if you were short of a keyboard part, there was nothing that could be done. Bits of Rick became really precious – we would grab them."

Between them, they isolated Wright's Hammond organ and VCS3 synth playing, giving his work prominence. As Youth put it: "It was like an Indiana Jones adventure in a way, playing around with all these references."

One of the most precious sections can be found on *Autumn 68*, its title a lovely, poetic nod to

Wright's *Summer 68* on Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother*. A tape was found of Wright playing the legendary pipe organ at London's Royal Albert Hall ahead of the band's June 1969 show there (after which they were banned for using a smoke bomb). "We've used a minute and a half of the twenty minutes there," Jackson said. "We gave it to Youth and selected a section."

Youth was delighted: "According to David, he [Wright] was playing his *Unfinished Symphony* just after they had finished sound-checking. It was amazing to discover that Rick had composed a symphony."

"I think we have successfully commandeered the best of what there is. I suspect this is it."

David Gilmour on *The Endless River*

One of the most pleasant surprises of *The Endless River*, though, was the rejuvenation of the other Floyd founder member, Nick Mason – which has since continued through his work with his band Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets.

"Nick has been playing a lot recently," Jackson stated at the time. "We came in to do the drum session, and he was completely on it. People underestimate how important Nick is in Pink Floyd. You hear it when someone else plays it; it's just not right. Nick is so effective for this band."

The piece that ties *The Endless River* all together is closer *Louder Than Words*, the sole track on the

album that has vocals, with lyrics written by Gilmour's wife, novelist Polly Samson.

"Polly came up with the idea for *Louder Than Words*," Gilmour explained. "Neither Nick nor I are the most verbal people, so Polly was thinking it was very appropriate for us to express what we do through the music."

"It took David and Polly a long time to get the lyric on it and the vocal," Youth said. "It was only two minutes, so we had to extend it and make it into a song. Nick did the drums again, David did all the guitars. I discussed with David bringing in some R&B backing vocals, with a view to making

it appropriate in the context of what we were doing and that it would make the record sound more like Pink Floyd. David really didn't like the idea of that."

A couple of weeks later, Youth and Durga McBroom,

the singer in Youth's dance ensemble Blue Pearl, were writing some new material for Blue Pearl. He told her about the project, and they decided to record some vocals for the track ("After she's picked up her chin from the floor!" Youth says with a laugh), with Youth fully ready to shoulder the blame if Gilmour wasn't happy with such insubordination. "I told Phil and Andy and they went [adopts fearful voice]: 'David's not going to like this – he said he didn't want backing vocals on it. You're going to hear some thunder!'"

Youth sent the tape, then heard nothing from Gilmour for a week or so.



Set the controls: Floyd at Olympic Studios in London in 1993.

“He phoned up about something else, and I eventually asked him what he thought about Durga’s backing vocals,” Youth said. “He replied: ‘Oh yes, I think they’re great – I’ve already sung some other things over them.’ [On the album, McBroom is joined by Sarah Brown and Louise Clare Marshall.] It’s funny with David. You think he’s going to be one way, and then he goes completely the other. He’s unpredictable like that, and that’s good.”

There was a great deal of deliberation about where the song should go on the album. At one point it was at the end of the third section, but all eventually agreed that it made little sense to go back to instrumentals after it, so it was put at the very end. In the end, the back sections of parts three and four were swapped over. “Conceptually, the one song at the end is pretty neat,” Manzanera said, laughing, “pretty good.”

Tinkering with the final mixes went on, but the actual recording has taken less than a year. “It wasn’t actually that long, from beginning to end, for a Floyd album,” Jackson says. “For any other group, it would have been a long process, but for a Floyd album it wasn’t that bad!”

Everyone was delighted. Youth views the project as “a restoration of their sovereignty”.

The news of the existence of *The Endless River* – its title part of the lyrics of *High Hopes*, the final song on *The Division Bell* – went public on July 5, 2014, when Polly Samson matter-of-factly announced it on Twitter, pre-empting a tabloid threat to spill the beans. Youth followed it up the following day on Facebook with his message: “Okay... peak experience number one, producing Pink Floyd.”

The announcement of the track-listing – and 18-year-

old Egyptian artist Ahmed Emad Eldin’s poignant artwork – on September 22 brought Floyd again to the forefront of the world’s media. Gilmour offered his explanation of the project: “When we finished *The Division Bell* sessions, we had many pieces of music, only nine of which had become songs on the album. Now with Rick gone, and with him the chance of ever doing it again, it feels right that these revisited tracks should be made available as part of our repertoire.”

The result is an old-fashioned album that demands your attention and repeated listening. “*The Endless River* is a continuous flow of music

“It wasn’t all plain sailing. We had serious disagreements at times about content, the validity of doing one part or not.”

Youth

that builds gradually over four separate pieces over the fifty-five-odd minutes,” Gilmour told us. “You have to get into the right mood to listen to this. There are lots of people who love to still listen to music that way: listen to the whole thing, the whole piece, all the way through and get really into the mood of the whole thing, rather than listening to shorter pieces, and this is for them, really.”

It’s something that demands your attention in this relentlessly soundbite-driven world.

“It’s like classical music,” Phil Manzanera said. “If you put the effort in, you get it back.”

“Music has got so disposable and functional,” said Andy Jackson. “People put their iPhone on shuffle and it’s something to kill a Tube journey. And people are craving depth. It does demand to be listened to that way [in full].”

As a result, it owes much to the Floyd of between 1968

and 1975, referring often to the majesty of their albums *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, *Ummagumma*, *Meddle* and *Wish You Were Here*. It certainly touches again on their experimental side, which Youth was keen to exploit.

“Even though Floyd were much more blues-based, they still had a very strong affiliation with krautrock, and it was through Rick that they had this European aesthetic with Moogs and the VCS3 – something that Eno was to do to a greater extent around the same time. Floyd touched upon it with *Welcome To The Machine* [on *Wish You Were Here*].”

What you’re left with is something that, despite the sterile, studio-created way it came together, seems bristling with inspiration.

“Pink Floyd have never patronised their audience,” Youth says. “Being true to yourself is more successful than being someone you think you should be. Those cats have got the confidence to do that, and they pull it off very well, I think.”

“Everyone who works in music tends to have a palette that is theirs, and that they use, and they’re never gonna sound like someone else,” Gilmour said.

“David was shrewd enough to realise that Pink Floyd is larger than the people involved,” Youth adds. “With a band like Floyd, the collective energy and spirit is so powerful, you can’t mess with it. It’s got its own magic and power. And so, of course, it continues, and David has managed to ride through all those ups and downs.”

“We’re certainly not going to sound like anyone else. It’s inevitable: the sum is greater than the parts,” Gilmour said.

So, as the *River* flowed, the question on everyone’s mind was: will *The Endless River* really

be the last new word from Pink Floyd? Andy Jackson thought so, but as he said at the time:

“I would have said that a couple of years ago. I never thought we would do Live 8. Rick going has made such a big difference.”

Phil Manzanera’s opinion was: “I would have thought so, as Rick’s not there any more. You

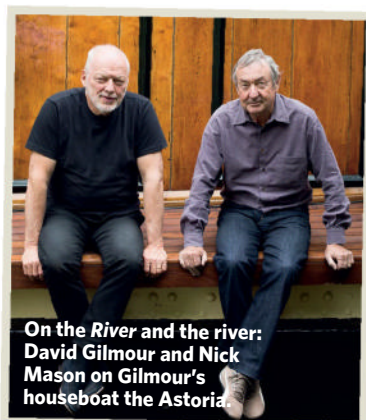
can never say never, but I would have thought their job is done. This would bookend the thing very neatly, as a tribute to Rick. I’d like to think if any of us Roxy Music people ever pegged it, somebody would do a tribute like this for us.”

Youth, on the other hand, didn’t necessarily see it that way. “I don’t give up on the idea that they will tour again in some way or another,” he said. “I’d love to see it, but I doubt it.”

The final word on that question, of course, had to be Gilmour’s, and in 2014 he was unequivocal. “I think we have successfully commandeered the best of what there is. I suspect this is it,” he says of *The Endless River*.

But as time has taught us, that wasn’t quite it. In September 2022 Pink Floyd released a brand new single called *Hey Hey Rise Up*, with all proceeds going to Ukraine Humanitarian Relief. Gilmour and Mason were joined by long-time Pink Floyd bass player Guy Pratt and Nitin Sawhney on keyboards and it featured vocals from Andriy Khlyvnyuk of Ukrainian band Boombox.

Hey Hey Rise Up is probably the last new material that will ever be attached to the band’s name, and, if it is the end – let’s face it, we’ve been here at least twice before... ●



On the *River* and the river: David Gilmour and Nick Mason on Gilmour’s houseboat the Astoria

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Pete Agnew photographed
for *Classic Rock* at the Hard
Rock Café in London's
Leicester Square.

"Fancy giving it another twelve months?"

It's the question **Nazareth's** Pete Agnew and Dan McCafferty asked each other every July 1 since 1972. Now, with McCafferty gone, the band's glory days behind them and Agnew the last surviving original member, he's happy to still be giving it another 12.

Words: **Dave Ling** Portrait: **Kevin Nixon**

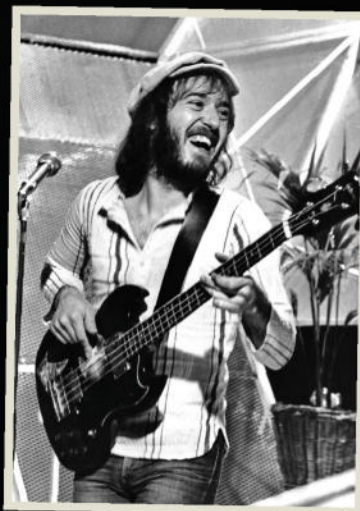
In late June last year, *Louder*, *Classic Rock* magazine's website, re-posted an epic interview with Nazareth's Pete Agnew and Dan McCafferty. First published way back in 2004, and conducted over an Olympic-level drinking session in the bar of the Pitfirrane Hotel in Fife, it's a rock'n'roll yarn that has *everything*, starting with Agnew and McCafferty, aged five, requesting to share a double desk on their first day at St Margaret's Primary School in Dunfermline, to them becoming best friends, and the gradual elevation of Nazareth, the band they co-founded in 1968, from wedding group into one of the most underrated and stubbornly persistent hard rock bands that these isles ever produced.

With a grin, McCafferty had revealed how each year on July 1, the anniversary of the band first giving up their day jobs to turn pro back in 1971, either he or Agnew would phone the other to enquire: "D'ya fancy giving it another twelve months?"

With a mix of good-natured humour and genuine astonishment that these things happened at all, the pair dug into a treasure chest of war stories that included being taken under the wing of early producer Roger Glover from Deep Purple, reluctantly teetering on stack heels and dressing up "like bloody Christmas trees" on *Top Of The Pops* during the era of 70s glam, and the eventual patronage of Guns N' Roses, whose singer Axl Rose fan-worshipped McCafferty, whose powerful gravelly voice could strip paint from walls.

When Nazareth and Lynyrd Skynyrd toured the United States together, in October 1977 they declined an invitation to travel with Skynyrd on the flight from Greenville, South Carolina to their next show in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The plane crashed, killing Skynyrd's Ronnie Van Zant, Steve and Cassie Gaines, road manager Dean Kilpatrick and both pilots.

"We'd seen their plane, which looked like Gaffa Tape Airlines," said Agnew. McCafferty claimed that one of the pilots had





Smokin': Manny Charlton and Pete Agnew with Nazareth in 1975.



Nazareth ready to hit the road in '73.



"Hey, these go up to eleven!" Agnew pumps up the volume in '74.

"We've been a rock band, we've been pop stars, and then we became dinosaurs."

Pete Agnew

attended the barbeque at the house of drummer Artimus Pyle before the classic line-up of Skynyrd boarded the aircraft. However, radio reports had claimed that Nazareth *did* board the flight, so when McCafferty telephoned home his wife Maryann wept tears of relief.

Unlike Purple, Skynyrd or GN'R, Nazareth neither attained nor particularly sought A-List celebrity, although without doubt they made a better than average career out of music, notching a run of hit singles that included *Broken Down Angel*, *Bad Bad Boy*, *My White Bicycle*, *This Flight Tonight* and *May The Sunshine* during the 70s, and recording a hefty catalogue that now includes 25 studio albums. With guitarist Manny Charlton quitting in 1990, and co-founding drummer Darrell Sweet dying of a heart attack while on tour nine years later, as Nazareth's first flush of stardom dimmed, Agnew and McCafferty gratefully accepted the status of being, in the bassist's own words, a band that "sings for its supper".

"We've been a rock band, we've been pop stars, and then we became dinosaurs," Agnew said that evening 20 years ago at the Pitferrane Hotel. "But live through the dinosaur period and you become a legend."

With the band not having a new album or tour to promote, or even an anniversary to celebrate, Louder had re-posted the Nazareth retrospective story in a fairly random fashion, but it rapidly began to draw readers, and its popularity continued to

increase over the following weeks. It went on to become Louder's most viewed music story of 2023, and second-most overall. Which seems like a good enough reason for a catch-up with the Naz...

Fifteen years on, it's Pete Agnew alone that greets *Classic Rock* for an alcohol-free yet no less convivial lunch at the Hard Rock Café in London's Leicester Square. A year after losing his oldest friend and bandmate McCafferty at the age of 76, the pain from that still lingers. The pair had stated many times before that they were like an old married couple. If one of them was late coming down from their room for a hotel breakfast, the other knew perfectly well what to order for them.

Dealing with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which causes a shortness of breath, rendered singer McCafferty's final few years in Nazareth difficult. He was a fiercely proud guy, and despite his well-publicised drinking and smoking, throughout his career only a handful of shows had to be cancelled, so the curtailing of a gig in Switzerland after just three songs waved a massive red flag.

McCafferty retired from the band on August 28, 2013, ending a 45-year run as frontman with the declaration: "If you can't do the job, then you shouldn't be there – Nazareth's too big for that." Agnew, the singer's best mate for more than half

a century, was "crushed".

Respecting McCafferty's departing wish that Nazareth continue without him would prove difficult, and Agnew admits that he very nearly gave up, especially after a doomed first attempt with Linton Osborne, a local singer, who he now admits was "a quick choice".

"For a while I thought: 'Oh well, at least we gave it a go'," Agnew says. "Maybe this was the time to stop."

It was Ted McKenna, former drummer with the Sensational Alex Harvey Band, who suggested to Nazareth that they check out Carl Sentance, an Englishman who had sung with Persian Risk



Nazareth miming to *Bad Bad Boy* on *Top Of The Pops* in 1973.

Loud 'N' Proud Nazareth in '73:
(l-r) Pete Agnew, Dan McCafferty,
Darrell Sweet, Manny Charlton.



(the Welsh band who introduced future Motörhead guitarist Phil Campbell), Krokus and the solo bands of Black Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler and Deep Purple keyboard player Don Airey.

A few days prior to our conversation, Facebook ‘memories’ had reminded me of the first time I saw Nazareth with Sentence at the mic, at the Brooklyn Bowl in London eight years ago. “That was Carl’s third or fourth gig, right at the start of the ‘new band’,” Agnew says.

Oddly, the audience that night had seemed just as nervous as the band. Nobody wanted a second failure.

With a new guy there’s always anxiety, but this was a brand new singer, and we were in London, which makes things more pressurised still. What I remember most about that gig was the intro tape bugging up.

In true *Spinal Tap* style, the tape rolled through twice and the audience stood around looking confused as it cut out and began playing for a third time. That doesn’t exactly bring a good feeling just as you’re about to walk on stage, but Carl dealt with the situation very well.

Yeah, he did. The ‘new boy’ strode out from the wings and demanded: “Kill that fucking tape, for god’s sake!” before adding: “We’re going to have a good time tonight, let’s kick some fucking ass.” That’s the guy’s character. Carl is a very, very good frontman. When the new band plays

somewhere for the first time, the reviews always say this is a guy that knows what he’s doing. He involves the audience and he’s energetic – I have to be careful not to get stepped on while he’s running about. He’s an old-school frontman and he fits in really well. Especially when you consider what enormous shoes he’s filling. Anyone coming after Dan had better be a first-class singer. Carl doesn’t sound like Dan – nobody could – but he’s a great fit with the band. We never had any thoughts that after Dan it could work. I had a lot of doubts. We got very lucky.

“It was quite an easy choice, actually: stop drinking or die. So I stopped.”

Pete Agnew

After that show at the Brooklyn Bowl, I suggested to you that *Love Hurts*, Dan’s signature power ballad (a song first popularised by the Everly Brothers back in the early 60s) should perhaps be retired from the set. You strongly disagreed.

What you’re saying is essentially true, though whenever I hear that song, regardless of the vocalist, in my head I still hear Dan singing it. But it would be impossible to drop *Love Hurts*. Without it there probably wouldn’t be a Nazareth. That song becoming a hit was what made the *Hair Of The Dog* album take off. It had come out in the UK

[in 1975] and done nothing in six months, then the same thing happened in the States. But Jerry Moss [co-owner of A&M Records], God bless him, heard our version of the song recorded as a B-side and insisted it went onto the album. Thank God that he did. It became such a big hit that Nazareth has lasted forever.

Unfortunately, we’re not like Rod Stewart, who releases one song and it’s a hit all over the world. We’ll have a great big hit in South Africa, or another song of ours takes off in Russia or Brazil and does absolutely fuck all anywhere else. It’s hard to keep track of that, because if you don’t play the local favourite everybody wants their money back.

Not receiving a phone call from Dan, and not being able to call him, on July first last year must have been very tough.

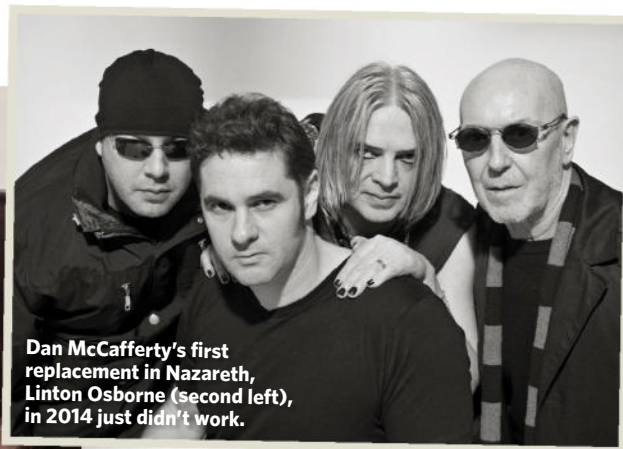
That first time was very, very weird. It’s the time I really, really felt it. The first of July will always mean something to me. The Americans have the fourth of July, Nazareth has the first of July.

Does it soften the blow a little that you get to spend so much time with your son Lee, who came into Nazareth on drums after Darrell Sweet died?

It does. Lee has become a real driving force in the band. He writes these really rocking songs. All the guys in the band are writers, which brings us a lot of different styles. ➤



Keeping the music alive (and the drinks flowing): Agnew (left) with Nazareth in 2015.



Dan McCafferty's first replacement in Nazareth, Linton Osborne (second left), in 2014 just didn't work.

“Carl [Sentance] doesn’t sound like Dan – nobody could – but he’s a great fit. We got very lucky.”

Pete Agnew

It was genuinely shocking to learn that you’d quit drinking a decade ago. It was quite an easy choice, actually: stop drinking or die. So I stopped.

It seems almost inconceivable. Nazareth were legendary drinkers.

[Laughs] Anyone who went out drinking with Dan and I would agree. Absolutely. But in the end it caught up with me. Every bodily function started to close down. I went into hospital, and for a while it looked like I might not be coming out again. Since then I haven’t touched a drop. To tell you the truth, I wasn’t an alcoholic, I just loved a bevvy. I like beer. I didn’t even like whisky. I don’t miss the buzz so much, just the taste.

How were the first gigs you played without having a drink? They were unusual. I never used to be drunk on stage but I always had a buzz on. Playing completely straight was weird. I had to ask: “Was that alright?” Because it didn’t really feel like that to me. But it passed, and it’s lovely to wake up in the morning and be able to remember why you got punched in the head the night before. There were times when I never had a clue.

Now that the dust has settled on the line-up changes, in your heart of hearts does it still feel to you like Nazareth?

[After a moment’s pause] That’s a hard one to answer. On some nights I realise that not only am I the last of the originals still in the band, I’m also the last one of us left alive. Manny [Charlton] had been out of the band longer than he was ever in it, so Jimmy [Murrison, who joined in 1994] is our guitarist. Those [very early] times are just memories for me. Dan and I continued Nazareth and it felt completely natural.

Obviously, when Dan had to leave, that’s when everything changed. Dan’s voice was Nazareth. He was what separated us from all those other bands – especially the heavy metal bands whose singers to me are interchangeable. As soon as Dan opened his mouth, that’s Nazareth. Without Dan it no longer felt like Nazareth, though it does again now.



Carl Sentance is “a very, very good frontman”, says Agnew.

How long did it take to reach that point?

I needed a few years. Jimmy and Lee have been there so long now, which helped to make things comfortable. But this was my best pal, and it was quite a wrench. I’d say it took three or four years. It felt so strange. I wouldn’t say it was like being in a covers band, but it felt a wee bit of a cheat. I had looked at all those other bands with just one original member, and now I was one of them. It was like: “Ah yes, fair enough, as long as the people still accept us.” We were still getting good crowds, in some cases bigger ones than we did before, because the reputation of this band [fronted by Sentance] is really, really good. That acceptance helped me to come to terms with the situation. I’ve realised that we are adding something to the Nazareth thing, not taking away from it.

Nazareth now play these amazing festivals in mainland Europe, attended by a younger type of fan who probably regards you as a new band. That must seem very odd.

A lot of people are not only seeing us for the first time, they weren’t even alive for the original band – people that don’t know or care who played on which album, they just know the name and enjoy hearing the songs. And you know what? If they think it’s Nazareth and I think it’s Nazareth... it’s Nazareth.

And yet here in the UK we rarely see Nazareth play any more. There was a pretty big push to regain some of the lost ground at the start of the current millennium, but it now feels like that’s been relinquished.

It’s very difficult for a band like us to do a tour

and make it work financially.

Our very good friends Big Country do nothing but play here [in the UK], they’re out every weekend. Because they’re regulars they have retained their fan base. There’s no point in playing one British gig every blue moon. We’ve done twenty gigs in Germany in the last two months, but when we try to play here we tend to get: “‘Oh, those guys? Are they still going?’” It’s always been like that for Nazareth. For twenty years we scarcely played here at all. I’d love to rectify that, but it’s the financials. And starting out again in clubs? No. I did all that stuff a long time ago.

Keeping the Nazareth flag flying through good times and bad: Agnew with the band in Berlin in 2020.



“Without *Love Hurts* there probably wouldn’t be a Nazareth.”

Pete Agnew

So if a band like Status Quo happen to read this...

Ah, you see, that’s another problem. Not a lot of bands [of our own vintage] will let us open up for them. Now and again we get a gig with one of the biggies, and then we don’t hear from them again for three or four years. I won’t say any more than that.

Nazareth with Carl Sence have released two albums. The sound became a little punkier with *Tattooed On My Brain* and *Surviving The Law* (2018 and 2022).

Probably it has. It’s harder edged than what we were doing in the eighties. That’s what keeps things interesting. I think the fans quite like that diversity.

Why is it still important for you and Nazareth to keep on making new music?

It’s about credibility, mainly. People must know that you’re still creative. We’ll never stop writing. The problem is getting to play the songs live. Even if an album gets great reviews, it’s tough to include more than a couple of new ones in the set. Not too long ago we played with Deep Purple, and people said: “That set, you could have played it twenty or thirty years ago.” To which I replied: “Wait till you see these guys [Purple].”

Nazareth’s road tales of turning down the offer to travel on Skynyrd’s plane, your association with Guns N’ Roses, and even you lending fifteen pounds to a broke Robert Plant for petrol so that the Band Of Joy could get to a gig in Scotland, are legendary. Are new chapters still being written?

Aye. They’re a little less crazy than they were before, but life is never boring. For a while I started jotting them down [as an autobiography], and then I started to realise I’d probably have to wait till I’m dead to publish it. Otherwise I would start getting punches in the head.

Did Robert Plant ever pay back the fifteen quid you lent him?

Did he fuck! I’ve written that off. Maybe I should charge him interest.

If, as you said, Nazareth have been pop stars, rock stars, dinosaurs and legends, where do the band stand at this point in their career?

I would say we’ve become legendary legends. Nah, I’m kidding. What I’m most proud of is that we tried to put across a number of different types of rock music. A couple of times – more than a couple of times – it didn’t work, but on the

Nazareth at Crocus City Hall, Moscow in 2015: (l-r) Lee Agnew, Jimmy Morrison, Carl Sence, Pete Agnew.



whole we were fairly successful at it. We always tried to make each record different than the one before. We’ve made twenty-five albums, and I can put my hand on my heart and say that I’ve liked most of them.

You’re now seventy-seven. Will you ever retire?

I can’t even think about not being in the band. I can be off the road for a month and quite enjoy it, but after five weeks I need a gig. If the time comes when I start talking about scones and cups of coffee, please shoot me. Y’know, *that’s* when I start drinking again [laughs].

But here’s the thing. We do these European festivals with bands of a certain vintage – I’m talking about Sweet, Uriah Heep and Wishbone Ash; I call them ‘the usual suspects’. When it was time to leave, I always used to say: “See you next year.” But now I find myself saying: “I might see you again.” There’s a big difference. 🍷

Nazareth play Love Live Festival in Blackpool on March 2, 2025, and will tour at the same time.



SAM SCOTT-HUNTER

The HOT LIST

THE ESSENTIAL NEW ROCK TRACKS YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS MONTH
AND THE BANDS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR

Spring has well and truly sprung, bringing an abundance of gigs for our diaries, new tracks for our playlists and bands to get stuck into. Our Tour Dates pages have got you covered for live action (p95), but where to start on the new-tuneage front? Right here, of course. From hard rockers and garage punks to folk troubadours and rootsy bluesers, this month's Hot List

cherry-picks some highlights that we think are worth your attention – including an enigmatic Russian singer-songwriter standing against the war in Ukraine, *and* the first new Blues Pills music in four years, *and* some swashbuckling NWOBHM-inspired men in tights. Well, we do like to give you variety here...

As ever we hope you enjoy this month's selections. For more each week visit classicrockmagazine.com

Wyth Hazel *Ride On*

These devout Lancastrians take us on the musical equivalent of a pilgrimage through Tolkien-esque woods and Arthurian churches, via some classic 70s tunesmiths (think Rainbow, Judas Priest, Blue Öyster Cult, Kansas...). Hovering in similarly nostalgic territory to that of Ghost and Green Lung – but with a stronger foothold in medieval history – *Ride On* is galloping, broadsword-brandishing riff-cake with Biblical origins. Heavy metal with stained-glass windows. Part of a split seven-inch single with fellow NWOBHM fanboys Phantom Spell. Nice. wythhazel.com

Elles Bailey

Enjoy The Ride

This British rock'n'soulster has been quietly blending blues and rootsy tones for the past few years. Now she's hit a new, hooky sweet spot on this sultry first slice of her next album, *Beneath The Neon Lights*. "I'm not going to lie," she says. "Trying to find the creative head-space to write a record, and then being present during the mixing process when you have a toddler and you're trying to be the best parent you can be, is definitely a struggle, but it's been worth it."

ellesbailey.com



Marjana Semkina

We Are The Ocean

We first came across Russian singer-songwriter Marjana Semkina through her work in folky progressive duo *Iamthemorning*. Now based in the UK, in light of the Russia-Ukrainian war, she's treading in ethereal yet urgent territory with this compelling first taste of her new solo record, *Siren*. "This song was inspired by all of my Russian friends coming out to protest against the war when it started," she says, "despite the fact that there was a very good chance they'd get arrested for doing so – a lot did in the end."

facebook.com/marjanasemkina ➤

Wine Lips *Fried IV*

Canadian garage punks Wine Lips have written a version of *Fried* for all four of their records since they formed in 2015. Occupying a manic, buzzy head-space between King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard and Bad Nerves, this latest one is a tight, ultra-caFFEinated blast of distortion and psychedelic punk rock, dipping into slow stoney territory midway through that gives them a 90s sheen. Frantic, freaky and a lot of fun.

winelips.bandcamp.com



Marisa & The Moths *Get It Off My Chest*

Slick, heavy minor-key strains of Evanescence and Alter Bridge power through this fired-up new single from Marisa & The Moths. “*Get It Off My Chest* explores giving in to temptation as a form of escape,” Marisa says, ahead of the song’s parent album *What Doesn’t Kill You*, which comes out this month. “Inspired by a personal experience, I sought refuge from drama and grief, but somehow trouble still found me – maybe even seeking it out subconsciously?”

marisaandthemoths.com

Collateral *Glass Sky*

Ahead of their UK support tour with FM (starting May 3), the Kent-based melodic rockers tease their next album, *Should've Known Better* – produced by Dan Weller (Those Damn Crows, Monster Truck, Kris Barras...) – with this slick, chant-along anthem. Mixing 80s-tastic shades of H.e.a.t with funky guitar jibes, plenty of brooding contemporary heaviness and a respectable quota of cheese, it strides eras with the sort of hair-tossing braggadocio you didn't think existed outside vintage Whitesnake videos and Nicolas Cage movies. It's sure to delight existing fans, and pull in some new ones.

collateralofficial.com



John Smith *Candle*

The opening track from British folk-rockers John Smith's new album *The Living Kind* is a beautifully delicate, moody affair – swirling gentle strains of Americana with folk and indie, bathed in melodic heartbreak and introspection. Cooked up over the past couple of years in Maine (i.e. album producer Joe Henry's home), the album found Smith drawing from Talk Talk's classic *Spirit Of Eden*, John Martyn's *Solid Air* and Joni Mitchell's electro-acoustic opus *Hejira*; an enigmatic trio of influences that offers a sound indication of the kind of captivating matter to be found here. Gorgeous.

johnsmithjohnsmith.com



And keep an ear out for... Blues Pills

Much has happened since the Sweden-based quartet last released a studio LP (2020's *Holy Moly*). The world went through a pandemic. The band wrote a lot of songs, in place of destroyed tour plans. Lead singer Elin Larsson had a baby. Now with a new album, *Birthday*, due in August, all this looks set to shine through their music.

"With this album we truly let ourselves be free, leaving all the boundaries and expectations behind to write music we love," the band say. "We wanted to capture the raw and authentic feeling from when we play live on an album, yet pushing ourselves to create and write the best work we've ever done. Elin was pregnant during the recordings, and what's more rock'n'roll than that? To create human life and music."

In a sense it's a long way from the bluesy classic rock project started in the American Midwest by Larsson and then-bassist (now guitarist) Zack Anderson in 2011. The just-released title track is bolder than their previous work. There's a sense of their shyness, once apparent on stage and off, slipping away. Yet the spark that set them off remains, except now it's fuelled by life experience and toughened songwriting chops.

bluespills.com

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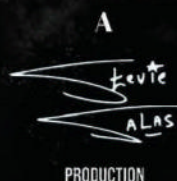
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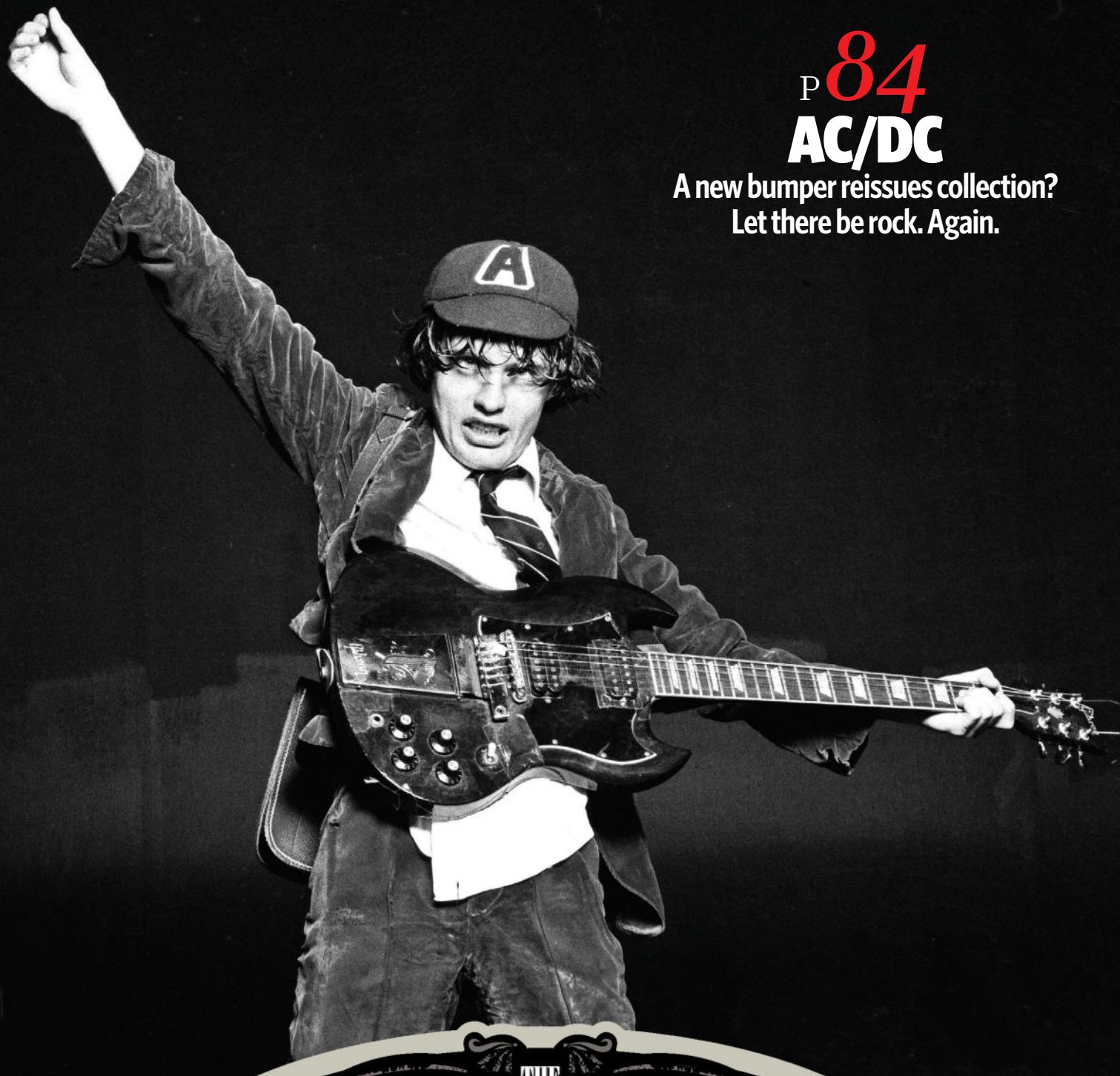
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■	PISH

EDITED BY IAN FORTNAM

THE HARD STUFF *The Ultimate* ROCK REVIEWS *Section*

14 PAGES

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THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS



Kings Of Leon

Can We Please Have Fun LOVETAP/CAPITOL

Let the subtly melodic, sporadically explosive and pleasingly edgy times roll.

Fun, you say? In these times of war, famine, economic strife and queues in pubs for seven-quid pints, Nashville's space-country glowerers Kings Of Leon make for unlikely Michael McIntyres. But while we're unlikely to find them doing 10k runs dressed as sideboards or being interviewed by Little Ant & Dec to promote this ninth album, they have emerged from the weighty musings of 2021's *When You See Yourself*—wildfires, marital fracture, addiction, anxious youth—cautiously coated in silver lining.

'There's a war outside, we should all get high,' Caleb Followill recommends as the cosmic funk groove of *Nowhere to Run* kicks in. Later, images of 'panic on the streets' are couched in the vital and excitable tones of early 00s riot-rock on *Nothing to Do*. It's misleading to suggest that Followill is in ebullient and optimistic mood here; these are songs of confusion, bewilderment and anxiety. But as abstract hints of falling bombs, civil unrest and ecological collapse are peppered around songs titled *Ballerina Radio* and *Rainbow Ball*, alongside moments of youthful nostalgia and romantic security, there's a distinct sense that life, love—and occasional lark—must go on amid the chaos.

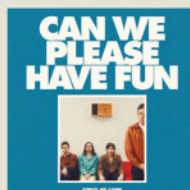
KOL certainly sound as though they're having fun with their recent future-rock incarnation. Since Markus Dravs updated their sound on 2016's *Walls* they've developed textural kinships to Tame

Impala, The National and Death Cab for Cutie. Now, with Harry Styles producer Kid Harpoon adding a confident mainstream glint, they settle into such sonics, unshowy and under no pressure to over-press their modernity. It's an approach that allows the amorphous, motorik and Foals-y tones of *Ballerina Radio* and *Rainbow Ball* (and later the euphoric sludge rock of *Seen*) to service subtly crafted pop melodies which might not be the band's most direct but are certainly among their most infectious growers. And it lets the album's real canyon bawlers—*Mustang*, *Nothing To Do*, *M Television*, the gloriously strident *Hesitation Generation* recalling their early passion—leap from the mix.

There's also plenty of playfulness on display. *Actual Daydream* alternates between surf flamenco Costello verses, and choruses akin to a mariachi Fleetwood Mac. Alt. country ballad *Don't Stop The Bleeding* drifts along sweetly on crackling antique beats. The beautiful *Split Screen* revisits an emotional late-night video call, awash with suitably hypnagogic atmospherics. Bossa nova hula ballad *Ease Me On* sips its pina colada in an inflatable pineapple ring floating not too far from Mac DeMarco. It's no surprise party—and less giant leap than consolidatory glide—but *Can We Please Have Fun* has its fair share of high times.

■■■■■■■■■■

Mark Beaumont



Neil Young & Crazy Horse

Fu##in' Up REPRISE

Shakey adds yet more Ragged edge to former *Glory*.



Recorded live in 2023, *Fu##in' Up* finds Young and co. performing

their classic 1990 album *Ragged Glory* almost in its entirety. When first released, that album solidified Young's newfound reputation as the Godfather of Grunge. This gloriously loud and distorted rendition does nothing to dispute that sobriquet.

The songs have been re-titled, presumably to drive home the point that old songs can exist anew—they're familiar, but different. Young and Crazy Horse never perform their songs in quite the same way each night, of course, and *Fu##in' Up* exemplifies that spontaneous, exploratory spirit. Listening to these geezers whipping up a hurricane of monolithic thud and skronk is always irresistible. The climactic 15-minute version of *Chance On Love* (*Love And Only Love*) is a particularly gargantuan thrill.

This latest chapter in Young's investigative journey through his vast back catalogue is no mere exercise in nostalgia, it sounds absolutely vital.

■■■■■■■■■■

Paul Whitelaw

Kim Gordon

The Collective MATADOR

Sonic Youther's second solo record brings fun along with the noise.



Kim Gordon has been making music for a very long time. The first

Sonic Youth records came out more than 40 years ago, and since then she has worked with everyone from Glenn Branca to Yoko Ono. And yet, surprisingly, this album is only Gordon's second solo release, following lukewarm on the heels of her 2019 debut *No Home Record*, to which this album is unarguably a follow-up.

As with *No Home Record*, *The Collective* was produced by Justin Raisen (Charlie XCX, John Cale, Yeah Yeah Yeahs) and is a well-knitted-together combination of Raisen's jittery beat and Gordon's vocals. But while Gordon's debut was impressionistic, splintered and languid, *The Collective* seems looser, noisier and, on tracks like

I'm A Man, funnier. It's a very New York record, it's an energetic record, and while the older listener would enjoy some guitar playing from Gordon—that sort of thing seems to be supplied by Raisen and engineer Anthony Paul Lopez—it's her attitude, not the glitchy beats, that really gives *The Collective* its aggression and fun.

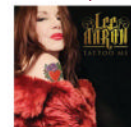
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David Quantick

Lee Aaron

Tattoo Me NUCLEAR BLAST

Canada's Metal Queen doesn't quite cover her bases.



Forty years ago, Lee Aaron was making her bid as the Metal Queen. While

the throne might ultimately have gone to another, the Canadian singer contented herself by reinventing herself through the prism of jazz and even opera. Having returned to rock with 2016's *Fire And Gasoline*, *Tattoo Me*, album number 18, sees Aaron pick songs from across the rock canon to lend her dusky tones to.

Covering everyone from Nina Simone to Jet, Elastica and Alice Cooper, *Tattoo Me* plays out like a covers band trialling material in a dive bar. The album's best moments are undoubtedly when Aaron flexes her hip-swinging rock chops, with relatively obscure cuts like The 77's *Tattoo* and Heart's *Even It Up* benefitting from her swagger. There are swings and misses, however; *Are You Gonna Be My Girl* is overly ploddy, and *Is It My Body* feels threadbare, making the album a patchy listen with shining moments.

■■■■■■■■■■

Rich Hobson

TSOL

A-Side Graffiti KITTEN ROBOT

Originals and well-chosen covers make up a winning hand.

Legendary Los Angeles skate-punks TSOL have been going, on and off in various versions, since 1978, which is a remarkable achievement in itself. The fact that they continue being any good is even more remarkable. Perhaps the trick is to take breaks from time to time—this is their first album since 2017's *The Trigger Complex*—or just to never give up. Either way, *A-Side Graffiti*, a brand new collection of new songs and covers, is excellent. From fierce originals like *Swimming* and *Nothing's Ever*

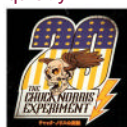
Right, which are anthemic in a way most 90s pop-punk never could be, to spectacularly well-chosen covers – a dark, rewritten *What A Wonderful World*, a Bowie-faithful *Can You Hear Me?* and, best of all, a spot-on remake of Magazine's *Rhythm Of Cruelty* – this is a loud, powerful and exciting album.

David Quantick

The Chuck Norris Experiment

20 GHOST HIGHWAY

Boy, those decades went by quickly.



If you're wondering, a 'Chuck Norris experiment' is when you goad an 80-year-old man wearing Wrangler jeans and rambling about Jesus and America to kick you in the teeth. It's no mean feat to create the aural equivalent, but TCNE have been delivering that glorious, bone-breaking crunch for (you guessed it) 20 years now.

These hard-charging Swedes pull out all the stops for this anniversary album, delivering an all-hands-on-deck bevy of scorched in their trademark action-glam style. Witness, for example, the hard-partying *You Go Boom*, an absolutely ruthless foot stomper that sounds like Danko Jones fronting Skid Row. *Surprise (And Everybody Dies)* is

an epic tambourine shaker. There's a killer Zodiac Mindwarp cover (*Prime Mover*), and then there's *Bats*, which somehow turns the 1966 *Batman* theme into an excessive riff orgy. And so on.

This album will leave you sweat-soaked and hungry for another couple of decades' worth of maximum rock'n'roll.

Slazegrinder

Chris Shiflett

Starry Nights & Campfire Lights SNAKEFARM

Moonlighting Foo Fighters covers Thin Lizzy and Hanoi Rocks on stopgap EP.



Chris Shiflett's country-music bonafides are in no doubt by now. The Foo Fighters guitarist has carved out a kerr-twangin' parallel solo career that has seen him living out his honky-tonk dreams, like Willie or Waylon if they'd been raised on The Replacements.

The big draws on this seven-track digital EP – released just six months after his last album, 2023's *Lost At Sea* – are the countrified covers of Thin Lizzy's outlaw classic *Cowboy Song* and Hanoi Rocks' classic broken-hearts-'n'-smashed-bottles ballad *Don't You Ever Leave Me*. The former has the whiff of a line-dancing night, the latter features some sweet slide guitar

and an ill-advised attempt to replicate Mike Monroe's spoken-word part. Both are heartfelt, if inessential – something that could be said about the five live *Lost At Sea* songs that bulk out the EP.

Wille and Waylon would approve, even if they wouldn't lose any sleep over it.

Dave Everley

Desperate Measures

Sublime Destruction CADIZ

Early-80s New Zealand punk band reanimated in early-20s South London.



Once invited to kiss the papal punk ring of Joe Strummer himself when

they played at a Clash gig aftershow in New Zealand, Desperate Measures have been resurrected 40-odd years later by sole remaining original member Eugene Butcher, with a new line-up of unlikely London lads bolted on. They may look like a crew of binmen, but DM are genre aficionados: they know the punk-rock story inside out and back to front. Meaning you get some impressive Stooges-influenced craftsmanship (the resolute garage groove of *Enjoy The Ride* and the intimidating dark menace of *Seven Sisters*), Psychedelic Furs with a hint of Leatherface (the

melodic harmonies of *Thinking of England*), and the *Phantasmagoria* extravagance of *Flowers At Your Door*. All with level of skilled musicianship far exceeding the formulaic Fisher-Price punk of yer average contemporary outfits, not least guitarist Michael Gaffney's accomplished grasp of tone.

Alex Burrows

Albert Hammond

Body Of Work EARMUSIC

Veteran songwriter re-enters the fray.



Those of a certain age will know 79-year-old OBE-awarded Albert Hammond as the writer of such monoliths as *The Air That I Breathe*, *Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now* and *To All The Girls I've Loved Before*, among others. *Body Of Work*, his first all-new album in almost 20 years, sees him channelling the young folk-rock artist he was in the early 70s, who had hits himself with *The Free Electric Band* and *It Never Rains In Southern California*, and in flashes it recaptures that energy and insight. While the frictionless production and arrangements wheeze somewhat with dated tropes, his lyrics remain an interesting mix of troubadour sentimentality about

relationships and world-weary, almost bilious cynicism about the world they exist in. 'Chinese phones' and 'propaganda clowns' are among his dislikes, but overall joie de vivre wins out.

Chris Roberts

Scott H. Biram

The One & Only Scott H. Biram BLOODSHOT

Texan bluesman returns with his first album in four years.



Scott H. Biram has led a turbulent life, involving a childhood breathing the air pollution of his home town, a near-fatal road accident 20 years ago, and kicking against the Trump-supporting pricks of the Lone Star state who ran riot that fateful January 6, as lamented on *Sinner's Dinner*.

All of that has fed into his latest album, a thoroughly weathered, gritty, burnt out, riled up affair, which revisits the dirt tracks of old blues, lo-fi weirdness, rock'n'roll, including a fine, hollering cover of Leadbelly's *Easy Rider*, but which also features moments of acoustic introspection, almost Nick Drake-like at times, as he mulls frankly on themes of loneliness, alcohol dependency, failed romance.

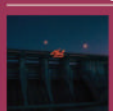
David Stubbs

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Marcus King

Mood Swings SNAKEFARM



While 2022's *Young Blood* put Marcus King in the fast lane, it's sobering to learn that the South Carolina guitarist spent the associated tour debating the best way to kill himself.

Rick Rubin-produced third album *Mood Swings*, then, is a lifeline, King warning of the emotional depths he'll plumb with song titles like *Fuck My Life Up* and *Bipolar Love*. The title track is a bleak welcome, with a crackly acetate voice intoning 'hopelessness and terror' over processed drums. But a Curtis Mayfield-style guitar line arrives to rescue the song, setting the tone for a record that is more in thrall to soul than to blues, and promotes King's keening voice above his guitar playing (*Delilah* has one of the few extended solos).

At times, like on *Hero*, King's healing process leads him into R&B slushies that make you miss the crunch of old cuts like *Hard Working Man*. But this record is real, raw and often beautiful, as on the happy/sad acoustic trill of *Soul It Screams* and the aforementioned *Delilah*, which is as good as piano-banging torch songs get.

David Stubbs

The Taj Mahal Sextet

Swingin' Live At The Church In Tulsa LIGHTNING ROD

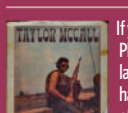


The titular Church was the home base of Leon Russell, and perhaps the spirit of his old friend coaxed Mahal's crack band to greater heights on this set of staples, covers and never-before-heards. Underpinning it all, the 81-year-old's life force, emotional intelligence and grizzly-bear vocal remain inspiring.

David Stubbs

Taylor McCall

Mellow War BLACK POWDER SOUL/THIRTY TIGERS



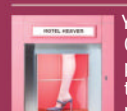
If you caught Robert Plant's *Saving Grace* last year, you'd surely have marked the card of his support act.

Taylor McCall is more impressive still on this studio debut, whose songs imagine letters that might have been sent home from Vietnam by his late grandfather. On golden hour strums like *Rest On Easy* and *Whiskey Costs Less*, it's potent indeed.

David Stubbs

Yellow Days

Hotel Heaven SUGAR LOAF



Yellow Days (aka George van den Broek) push roots further out than most, his artsy psychedelic swirl nodding to Tame Impala but always leaving a trail back to key influences Ray Charles and Sam Cooke. This third album depicts the worst hotel since Jack Nicholson roamed the Overlook, but beckoned by intoxicating soul hollers you can't help but swipe your key card.

David Stubbs

Charlie Parr

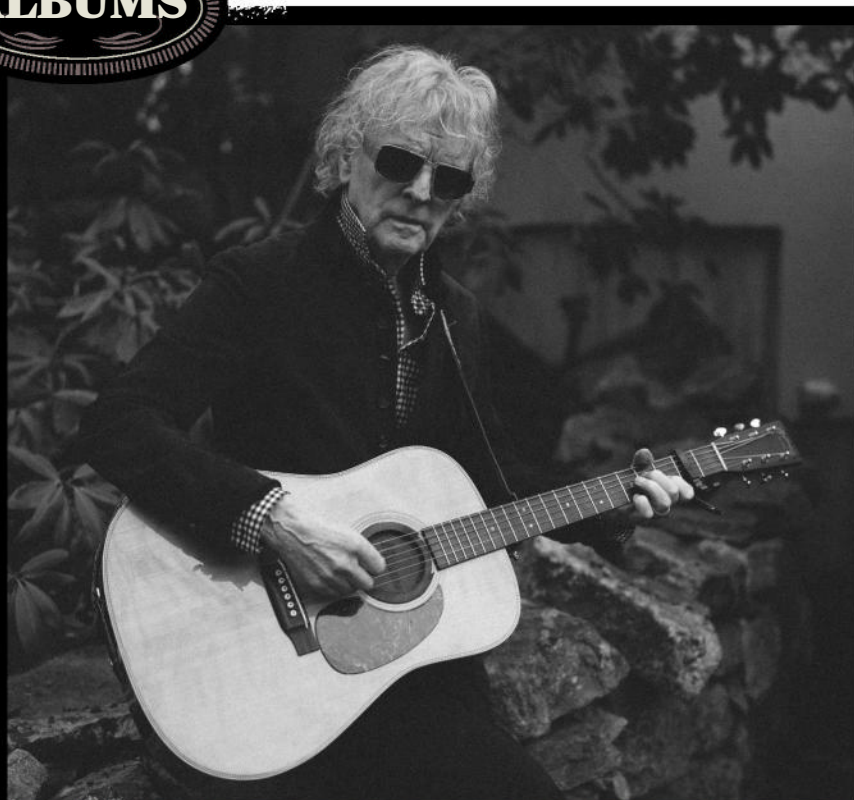
Little Sun SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS



Minnesota-born guitarist Parr is one of the greatest living exponents of Piedmont blues. But after 18 albums, *Little Sun* sees Parr backed by a full band for the first time. With multi-instrumentalist Marisa Anderson spinning plates, the widescreen sound suits this career solo artist, and standouts like *Boombox* and *Ten Watt* whip up a rollicking hoedown ambience.

David Stubbs

Marcus King: a record that is more in thrall to soul than to blues.



Ian Hunter

Defiance Part 2: Fiction SUN

Weightier second helping from star-studded, covid-era purple patch.



Defiance' perfectly describes Ian Hunter as he approaches his 85th birthday. Firstly against the ageing process that shows no sign of eroding his chops, spirit or the eloquently poetic yet laceratingly confrontational spark that placed him among the UK's finest songwriters over 50 years ago. It could also be against being stigmatised as a nostalgia act, when he's always decidedly more concerned with making his next album than repackaging old ones.

Defiance Part 1 arrived in April '23 as an uncontrived selection from the prolific composing spree Hunter embarked on during 2020's covid lockdown, songs farmed out for home embellishment by a hefty roll call starting with Ringo and Jeff Beck. Transcending perilous star-guest syndrome while keeping the mood buoyant for desperate times, it attracted the best reviews of his seven-decade career, most praising his songs and performances. Hunter says he saved "the little more serious" stuff for *Part 2*; "My take on what's going on" including wars, political turmoil, crime and weather, in another compelling affirmation of his irrepressible muse and unique standing in rock.

Aided by co-producer Andy York and the telepathic Rant Band, *Defiance Part 2: Fiction* boasts another flotilla of unobtrusive guests, including Beck and Taylor Hawkins

playing final sessions, Mott keyboard player Morgan Fisher, Brian May and assorted members of Cheap Trick and Def Leppard, plus Lucinda Williams enabling Hunter's first recorded duet.

An old-school 10 tracks include several melody-enhanced rockers trying to make sense of modern life, including hook-laden *People*, May-festooned *Precious*, uproarious *Everybody's Crazy But Me*, and infectious *Fiction* pumped by Fisher's piano and garnished with strings. Slow-grind legalisation-call *Weed* and menacing anti-pollution *Kettle Of Fish* rail and reason through his voice of experience.

Those trademark intimate ballads shine again on startling subway tragedy *The Third Rail*, Beck uncurling dramatic punctuation, and *What Would I Do Without You* reaffirming Hunter's love for wife Trudi with Williams's counter vocal, closing the set with *Hope's* widescreen optimism.

When this writer first met Hunter he had just commenced harnessing his Tin Pan Alley songwriting apprenticeship to Mott The Hoople. That he's still honing his craft 55 years later and already talking about *Defiance Part 3* is quite remarkable.

As Hunter himself declares on *This Ain't Rock And Roll*: 'They don't make 'em like that any more.'

★★★★★★★★★★
Kris Needs

Steve Conte

The Concrete Jangle

WICKED COOL

New York scenester and former Doll continues Andy Partridge hook-up.



Steve Conte's most notable claim to fame might be his membership of

the early-noughties line-up of the New York Dolls, but the New Jersey guitarist has now formed an arguably unlikely songwriting partnership with erstwhile XTC post-punk legend Andy Partridge, and *The Concrete Jangle* is the second Conte album to feature the fruits of their collaborations.

Opener *Fourth Of July* is as upbeat a heartland rocker as the title suggests, and it's very difficult to dislike this sun-drenched, harmony-laden celebration. *Shoot Out The Stars* is another irrepressible Tom Petty-ish anthem, and *Girl With No Name* is bubblegum-rock par excellence. *Motor City Love Machine* sounds very much like you would imagine. All the while, the influence of Partridge is rarely that obvious, until we hear *Decomposing A Song For You*, a psych-pop confection drizzled with drowsy horns. Whoever you credit for *The Concrete Jangle*, though, it strikes a resonant chord.

★★★★★★★★★★
Johnny Sharp

Billy Morrison

The Morrison Project

TLG/VIRGIN

Billy's mates.

Rhythm guitarist Billy Morrison has spent the past 15 years in Billy Idol's band, alongside Steve Stevens. He has also made a lot of friends. On this third solo album, he's pushed the boat out.

It's a set of wide-ranging metal, punk and electro rockers, starting with *Drowning*, a personal diatribe against information overload that has been doing his head in lately. Then the guest overload begins. Ozzy Osbourne and Steve Stevens are thrown together on *Crack Cocaine*, Al Jourgensen and John 5 flex their tattoos on *The Ayes Have It*, Steve Vai and Slipknot singer Corey Taylor make an interesting combination on *Incite The Watch*. DMC raps on *Just Like A Movie*, while Persia Numan (Gary's daughter) coos backing vocals. Morrison takes a busman's holiday with Idol and Stevens on *Mr Dream* before

the ageless, indefatigable Linda Perry brings it all to a climax on *Chasing Shadows*.

★★★★★★★★★★
Hugh Fielder

BMX Bandits

Dreamers On The Run TAPETE

Tenacious Bellshill indie institution in rare form.



Scottish indie-poppers BMX Bandits have been a going concern, off

and on, for almost 40 years. This album, their twelfth, is without doubt the best and most ambitious thing they've ever released. And that's quite an achievement.

Filtered, as always, through the sensitive, funny, gently eccentric prism of benign cult leader Douglas T Stewart, the music on *Dreamers On The Run* is indebted to baroque 60s sunshine folk-pop. The arrangements by multi-instrumentalist Andrew Pattie, Stewart's current key collaborator, are exquisite. On the title track alone he channels Jimmy Webb, Brian Wilson and, via some wordless jazzy backing vocals, the Swingle Singers. Meanwhile, Stewart croons some typically romantic lyrics in that charmingly unaffected voice. The cumulative effect is utterly delightful. But that's not all, folks. Every song on this fairly short but very sweet album sticks.

Against the odds, BMX Bandits have finally painted their masterpiece.

★★★★★★★★★★
Paul Whitelaw

Son Of Man

Gaslight CHERRY RED

Distant relatives of Welsh groovers' third album keeps it trad, dad.



The title might coin a phrase that has grown in popularity in the social-

media age, but that's possibly the only thing identifiably 21st-century about the third album from this quartet formed by latter-day members of Welsh blues rockers Man. That said, just because *Far From Home* could have been made by Whitesnake in 1987 doesn't detract from its infectious FM-rock qualities. *Can't Stop Loving You* could have been written by an AI programme seeking to mimic a generic hard rock power ballad, but it's neatly

turned all the same. And while modern-day songwriters don't write feelgood, chugging-down-the-highway tunes about motorbikes like *The 103* any more, there's really no good reason why they shouldn't, even if insisting it 'ain't so erratic, it's so ecstatic' might not sell its charms to poetry purists.

An album with simple pleasures at heart, then.



Johnny Sharp

Snuff

On The Charabanc SBÄM

London punks give in to their folk urges.

As sure as eggs is eggs, if a punk band sticks around for long enough they're bound to go down the folk route eventually. And now it's the turn of Duncan Redmonds, frontman and remaining founder member of London punks Snuff, with this album of two halves.

The first is the familiar punchy punk they made their name with, the beauty of the Hammond organ on the title track contrasting perfectly with Redmonds's earthy vocal style, while elsewhere they bloody noses with pugilistic, ska-flecked high-speed romps.

The second half offers up the acoustic material the band are touring later this year. It's not too much of a stretch, to be fair, that everyman folk-tradition storytelling is evident in even

their speediest songs, and here this section – offering a new perspective on some of the previous tracks – acts as the lock-in after the party, the point where everyone is getting dewy eyed and sentimental. It's the perfect embodiment of old punks allowing themselves to mellow out and embrace a slower pace of life.

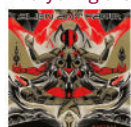


Emma Johnston

Alien Ant Farm

mAntras MEGA FORCE

Everything they want.



Back with their sixth album nearly a decade after *Always And Forever*, Alien Ant Farm blame the pandemic for interrupting their recording schedule – and themselves. 'You know you got me so cold, running round in circles, spinning out of control/And we are the reason we live with these problems,' Dryden Mitchell sings on *So Cold*, about the hassles that assailed them as they grew from their 30s into their 40s.

Still, it has given them plenty to write about. They've also broadened their alt.metal base, with a reggae lilt on the anguished *What Am I Doing?*, a musical split personality on *Glasses* and a poppy flavoured *No 1*. And, as the band who are probably better known to the

under 40s for *Smooth Criminal* than Michael Jackson is, they're always on the lookout for another cover. This time it's a tough version of Wham!'s *Everything She Wants*, although it's unlikely that lightning will strike twice.



Hugh Fielder

VR Sex

Hard Copy DAIS

Richly sleazy third album from Andrew Clinco's archly retro psych-punks.



A man of many musical moods and pseudonyms, Andrew Clinco is the former drummer with LA alt.rock trio Marriages, and now divides his time between androgynous dream-pop duo Drab Majesty and his more abrasive, sleazy, leather-trousered 'acid punk' project VR Sex. Performing as Noel Skum (a droll anagram of 'Elon Musk'), over the past four years Clinco has gradually fleshed out the band from arty studio concept to full-blooded multi-guitar monster.

Hard Copy, their third album, is their most sonically rich and agreeably noisy collection yet, densely layered with overlapping power chords, stampeding drums and booming baritone reports from some grimy nocturnal netherworld. While

the distortion-pedal blasterama of *Hush Money Millionaire* and juddering ear-bashers like *Runaway Runaway* are hardly reinventing the wheel, Cinco still gives these late-70s/early-80s signifiers a vigorous back-door shafting, with a heady aroma of vintage psych-rock creeping in alongside the muscular goth-punk shadings.



Stephen Dalton

While She Sleeps

Self-Hell SPINEFARM

Steel City hopefuls set themselves on a nu path.

You Are We was a watershed moment for While She Sleeps, the 2017 album's UK Top 10 chart success matched by effusive critical praise that marked them out as the Next Big Thing in British metal. But rather than repeat that album's winning formula, with their next two releases they trialled everything from choirs and raps to electronica, albeit with mixed results.

Self-Hell pays off their efforts. Bolder and more confident in its experimentation, tracks like *To The Flowers* and *Enemy Mentality* veer into Linkin Park-style nu-metal territory, while those like *Leave Me Alone*, *Rainbows* and *Dopesick* deliver classic Sleeps terrace-chant choruses suited to the arenas the band so brazenly court.

Setting their sights beyond

metalcore, While She Sleeps are pushing towards the same trend-setting creative realms as fellow Sheffield residents Bring Me The Horizon, and *Self-Hell* brings the sense that Sleeps are on the cusp of something big.



Rich Hobson

Stone Angels

Up In Smoke SELF-RELEASED

Bone-crunching heavy-rock goodness.



It's taken a while for Brighton's Stone Angels to follow-up their debut *Give In To Temptation*, but *Up In Smoke* should pick up the momentum in no time, given it showcases some seriously solid songcraft from the moment opener *Where The Crows Fly* kicks into life, with its thick, dirty riffage and soaring chorus. It's a heavyweight signature sound, part Alter Bridge and part Black Stone Cherry, with a generous helping of swampy blues. *Gambler*, *Hold On*, *Over The Edge* and *Supercharged* are full-on bruisers, while *Halfway To Nowhere* and *Ghost Of New York* vary the pace with greater melody and swooping strings, and the title track feels like the theme to a tragedy-drenched spaghetti western.

An impressive return.



Essi Berelian

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling



Rydholm/Säfssund: a glorious record.

Rydholm/Säfssund

Kaleidoscope
GODISPACEN/PRIDE & JOY MUSIC



"Here is a news flash. Geologists have voiced astonishment as Sweden was elevated from its traditional location in Northern Europe and flown five thousand miles over land and sea to become a part of America's West Coast. "Swedish prime minister Ulf

Kristersson told reporters he was 'looking forward to getting a nice sun tan...' In related news, noted Swedish musicians, Anders Rydholm and Lars Säfssund have left behind the world of melodic pomp-rock to craft a West Coast/AOR album that will leave connoisseurs of the genre purring with delight.

Grand Illusion bassist, rhythm guitarist and keyboard player Rydholm and Work Of Art vocalist Säfssund worked together previously under the banner of Art Of

Illusion, but billed as Rydholm/Säfssund the pair stretch out into more relaxed territory. *Now And Forever*, *What's Not To Love* and *Seven Signs Of Love* all glide along deliciously, powered by muso-friendly chops and daubed liberally with seductive salsa horns and congas. Guests on this glorious record include bassist Matt Bissonette, plus guitars from session icon Tim Pierce and Säfssund's Work Of Art bandmate Robert Säll.



Lipz

Changing The Melody

FRONTIERS



With this rather wonderful second album, Swedish siblings Alexander and Koffe Klintberg see themselves as "visionaries", here to "redefine the landscape of glam rock". That's a bit strong. An exercise in syrupy-sweet hooks, it could use a little grit under its crimson fingernails, but there's no denying its exceptional songs.



Alicate

Heaven Tonight PRIDE & JOY MUSIC



As the realm of melodic rock becomes more congested with each passing month, bands must project an 'X-factor' of some sort. Sadly, Swedes Alicate are content to regurgitate past clichés, pottering along in the slow lane. There's nothing inherently wrong with what they do, but listening to *Heaven Tonight* is like watching a film you've seen many, many times before.



JD Miller

Empyrean MIGHTY MUSIC



JD Miller were recently described as playing "the heaviest AOR around". On this fourth album the Swedish quartet perform a delicate balancing act. *The Butterfly*, for example, welds powerful riffs to a tuneful framework. *Empyrean* certainly won't be for everyone, but JD Miller's attempt to project traditional themes through a prism of modernity must be applauded.



King Zebra

Between The Shadows

FRONTIERS



Straddling the barrier between metal and melodic rock and fronted by the hugely impressive Eric St Michaels, King Zebra are the latest upstarts to burst out of Switzerland. Surging, crunching riffs and harmonies are expertly interwoven, topped off by strong choruses, with standout track *Children Of The Night* smooth yet insistent.





Slash

Orgy Of The Damned GIBSON

One of the busiest men in the biz has the blues. Again.

For most artists, releasing a covers album is a time-buyer, a moment to recharge the songwriting batteries and, if we're being benign, to pay tribute to childhood musical loves.

Slash, though? It's not quite the same. It can't be when you're not a singer and you've got a certain band hovering over you like a money-generating albatross. With the best will in the world, Slash Featuring Myles Kennedy & The Conspiracy couldn't have set the world alight even if they'd all been registered pyromaniacs. They're notably absent here, as are any of Guns N'Roses, although *Orgy Of The Damned's* keyboard player Teddy 'Zig Zag' Andreadis toured with GN'R, and he and bassist Johnny Griparic were part of Slash's Snakepit and Slash's Blues Ball. Curiously, for all the baggage shedding, *Orgy Of The Damned* is produced by Mike 'Appetite For Destruction' Clink.

Rather like Slash's self-titled album of 2010, it's a collection of tracks with different singers. Unlike the *Slash* album, though, it's overwhelmingly old songs, a collection of blues-ish covers, plus a new instrumental, *Metal Chestnut*.

The vocalists (only Iggy Pop sang a song on *Slash*) come and go. Beth Hart's sub-Janis Joplin take on *Stormy Weather* is unbearable, and Paul Rodgers is too

predictable on *Born Under A Bad Sign*, but Chris Robinson sounds about 100 years old on a fabulously grizzled take on *The Pusher*, Billy Gibbons glides over *Hoodie Coochie Man*, and Brian Johnson does his best Tom Jones on *Killing Floor*. And Chris Stapleton outsings them all on *Oh Well*.

As is only right and just, Slash is the star of his own show, and he's chosen material to showcase his guitar pyrotechnics. He dominates every track, whether sizzling on Steve Wonder's *Living For The City* or crashing through *Crossroads* like the hoariest of hoary bluesmen.

As a student of guitar history, Slash must know that in 1966 London was first alerted to the majesty of Jimi Hendrix, via Howlin' Wolf's *Killing Floor*. When Eric Clapton and assorted Beatles and Stones saw Hendrix play it at Central London Polytechnic, they instantly upped their guitar game. Slash's version channels (without impersonating) Hendrix, and adds supercharged riffs and duels with Steven Tyler's grandstanding harmonica. He's adding to history as well as making it.

Slash is a sideman rather than a main man, and his solo career has always been troublesome, but it looks like he's found a way ahead here.

★★★★★
John Aizlewood



FM

Old Habits Die Hard

FRONTIERS

London's AOR lifers keep up the great work.



A glistering benchmark for melodic rock excellence since the mid-

80s, FM have been admirably prolific in the years since their eagerly received re-formation in 2007.

Old Habits Die Hard is their eighth post-return studio record, and like *Synchronized* (2020) and *Thirteen* (2022) it defies the notion that bands of this vintage idly phone in some new material every year or two. Impressively, singer Steve Overland continues to confound common sense by sounding every bit as soulful and vivacious as he did back on the band's classic debut *Indiscreet* 38 years ago. On the likes of slick, shuffling opener *Out Of The Blue* and the radio-rock opulence of *Leap Of Faith*, his vocals are obnoxiously great, as FM salute their earliest trademarks while pushing a more contemporary edge. Conversely, the sun-kissed, bluesy pop-rock of *California* and the glitter-ball strut of *Blue Sky Mind* are subtle but ingenious swerves away from the norm.

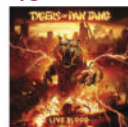
Fucking magic.

★★★★★
Dom Lawson

Tygers Of Pan Tang

Live Blood MIGHTY MUSIC

Tygers draw blood live.



Back in 1981, Tygers Of Pan Tang scored their second top-40 album

with *Spellbound*, which refined the raw attack of 1980's *Wild Cat* with sharper songwriting and a more focused aggression, only for record label interference to scupper their career by '83. Since 2000, founding guitarist Robb Weir has steered the band to a hard-won resurgence, and as the forceful set captured on *Live Blood* vividly illustrates, the Tygers can still bare their teeth on stage.

Vocalist Jack Miele, present since 2004, sings with an accomplished blend of grit and polish, ripping into Jess Cox-era bangers (*Gangland*, *Suzie Smiled*) without blunting their edge, and delivering John Deverill-period highlights (*Love Don't Stay*, *Paris By Air*) with appropriate lung power. Crucially, eight songs

from the current millennium impress with serrated riffs (*Only The Brave*) and keen melodies (*A New Heartbeat*), with closer *Blood Red Sky* bringing down the house impressively.

★★★★★
Rich Davenport

Glen Campbell

Duets: Ghost On The Canvas Sessions BIG MACHINE

Being dead is no problem for Glen Campbell as he duets with the stars.

Like Johnny Cash, Glen Campbell ended his career by releasing some of his most sympathetically curated albums. For *Ghost On The Canvas*, recorded the year after he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, he mixed songs written with producer Julian Raymond with those by writers such as Paul Westerberg and Jellyfish's Roger Joseph Manning Jr. And that, apparently, was that.

But a decade later the album has been dusted down, and a bevy of A-listers – including Carole King, Elton John, Eric Clapton and Sting – 'duetted' with the late star (Campbell died in 2017). All this studio trickery adds another layer of poignancy to an album that was already imbued with late-life love and loss, but Campbell's voice is so beautifully unadorned that his new singing partners fit in without too much trouble, and only Brian Wilson's frail contribution jars. Best in show? Dolly Parton.

★★★★★
Fraser Lewry

Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats

Nell' Ora Blue RISE ABOVE

Less a thriller, more a total shocker.



Seven years after the release of *Wasteland*, Uncle Acid's

rollicking fifth studio album, Kevin Starrs, the enigmatic Mr Big behind this now globe-trotting rock beast, has elected to take a detour from the down-tuned riffs and insanely catchy melodicism that made his name.

Essentially a solo project, this off-roading exercise finds Starrs writing and performing a synth-led soundtrack to an Italian murder mystery thriller that he's written but hasn't filmed. Across 19 tracks of lo-fi synthesisers (*Il Sole Sorge Sempre*), atmospheric tedium (the title track) and riffing

collages (*Tortura Al Telefono*), *Nell' Ora Blu* is as much an ordeal for the listener as it is for the cinematic victims of the Italian giallo thriller genre that's inspired Starrs. It would have succeeded as a well-edited EP. Instead it feels like being stuck in the middle seat of the middle row of an aisleless cinema, without an intermission in sight.

Julian Marszalek

The Zutons

The Big Decider ICEPOP

Mersey-pop band return with a bang.



In 2004, The Zutons were considered to be the shouty scouse oddballs among Britain's sharply dressed guitar bands. Yet their debut album was packed with psychedelic pop anthems that rightly earned them a Mercury Prize nomination that year. After a disappointing third album in 2008, the five-piece seemed to fall off the face of the Earth, while Amy Winehouse continued to lap up the plaudits for their most famous hit, *Valerie*. Now, 16 years on and two members down, the band have finally returned with their fourth album.

Backed by original producer Ian Broudie and Chic pop meister Nile Rodgers, *The Big Decider* sees The Zutons back to

their happy clapping playful best, with stomping numbers like *Creeping On The Dancefloor* and the saxophone-swinging *Disappear*. Introspective ballads such as *In Your Arms* also mix things up nicely. It's good to see that The Zutons haven't been killed off after all.



Damian Jones

Kelly Jones

Inevitable Incredible

IGNITION

Second solo album from the Stereophonics frontman.



This is the first new Kelly Jones solo material since 2007's off-the-cuff

Only The Names Have Been Changed. Other than its unplanned origins, though, *Inevitable Incredible* is different.

Inspired by a Christine Clark painting of a piano, then taking delivery of an old upright he admits to being a little dyslexic on, Jones ultimately spent six days in an isolated studio on a remote Norwegian island fashioning these eight songs, with all the vocals recorded live while he played piano.

Subsequent sessions added a string quartet to half of the tracks, subtle acoustic guitar to most, and a lap steel solo on *The Beast Will Be What The Beast Will Be*, but drums on only two, and it remains simply wrought.

Running at a succinct 33 minutes, *Inevitable Incredible* is a gentle and emotional mood piece, all about piano and the warm embrace of his voice. The title-track opener is best, so if you take to that, keep listening.



Neil Jeffries

Praying Mantis

Defiance FRONTIERS

These NWOBHM survivors are 50 not out.



Now half a century into what has been an inconsistent yet fascinating career, *Defiance* is the thirteenth studio album from New Wave Of British Heavy Metal stalwarts Praying Mantis. Like its three predecessors, the album features co-founding guitarist Tino and bassist Chris Troy alongside faithful guitarist Andy Burgess, plus the flying Dutchmen John 'Jaycee' Cuijpers on vocals and percussionist Hans in't Zandt.

For over a decade, and with Cuijpers's rousing presence at the forefront, this permutation of Mantis has perfected a sumptuous melody-meets-muscle approach that rarely disappoints. *Feelin' Lucky*, *Give It Up* and *Let's See* effortlessly combine sturdy backbones with strong AOR credentials. And after it was 'stolen' from them by Rainbow back in 1981, the

band have cheekily reclaimed the Russ Ballard-written anthem *I Surrender*. *Standing Tall*, described by its writer Tino Troy as a "club rave disco heavy metal anthem", is an undisputed wildcard.



Dave Ling

Then Comes Silence

Trickery METROPOLIS

Swedish goths keep things lush and atmospheric on latest album.

With the reboot of the film *The Crow* heading our way this summer, we can expect a surge in interest of all things goth from corners of the media that haven't given the genre a second thought - beyond the trials and tribulations of Nina from *Coronation Street* and the Whitby goth weekender - for years.

The lifers, however, are plentiful and passionate, and they are exactly the crowd *Then Comes Silence* have in their sights. 'Stay strange and pure at heart,' frontman Alex Svenson implores on *Stay Strange*, his voice a smooth, deep croon, before hammering the point home over the buzz of *Never Change*. Musically, the chilly post-punk influence of Bauhaus or Joy Division is offset by a very 80s windblown, cinematic sense of drama - opener *Ride Or Die* could have come straight from *The Lost Boys* - which

sometimes gets a little overripe (skip the pungent *Tears And Cries*) but is mostly presented with such silky production and confidence that you can be sure there'll be pints of snakebite and black raised to them across the land.



Emma Johnston

Per Wiberg

The Serpent's Here DESPOTZ

Swedish journeyman lays the mystique and menace on thick on dark third solo album.



Per Wiberg is best known as the keyboard player with Opeth and cult

Swedish beardies Spiritual Beggars, but *The Serpent's Here* is less of a self-conscious throwback than either of those bands. Wiberg's keyboards (and his unexpectedly powerful voice) may sit at the centre of tracks such as *Dead Sky Lullaby* and the inky mantra *Blackguards Stand Silent*, but there's a dark, modern edge to it all.

There's an air of brooding, not-quite-gothic menace to the slow-burning *This House Is Someone Else's Now*, with Wiberg singing: 'Bury my broken wings deep in the ground.' A closing cover of Warrior Soul's early-90s anti-anthem *The Losers* wraps up the magnetic despondency of it all.



Dave Everley

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE ROCK



The Boatmen: delivering two-ton arena sleaze.

The Boatmen

Hard Livin' SPAGHETTY TOWN



Man, the fuckin' Boatmen. Their name is such a hoodwink. Makes you think they sound like The Waterboys or something, and then you plop down the vinyl and it sounds like a swarm of murder hornets

stabbing your eyeballs. This is perhaps the most vicious Scandinavian action-rock band currently in operation, *Hard Livin'* is the saucy Swedes' fifth album, and it is a scorcher. *Rock N' Roll Explosion*, *Livin' On Lust* and the brain-rattling title track are all primo examples of the band's two-ton arena sleaze, a gorgeously filthy pig-pile of excessive flash guitar and slithery ooze,

like Turbonegro with Black Sabbath's cocaine budget. This is not mere riffola, it's rock'n'roll as a lifestyle, a blueprint for fabulous disaster, the slasher villain back from the dead to wreak more havoc. If you like AC/DC, if you like GN'R before the cornrows, if you like good times and late nights, you owe yourself to check out *Hard Livin'*.



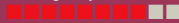
Still Animals

Still Animals

SLOVENLY RECORDINGS



Still Animals are from the US murder capital, St Louis. They could already be dead by the time you read this. This is deliciously blown-out garage punk of the highest order, full of sleaze and thunder, and it contains perhaps the greatest rock'n'roll anthem I've heard in years in *Look Kool*. Bargain-basement rock doesn't get any better than this.



Antagonizer

Surprise, Motherfucker

GODLESS AMERICA



A pretty incredible all-wimmin punk/metal hybrid from Gainesville, Florida who occasionally sound like a biker gang running riot at a Judas Priest gig, or sometimes like the Sex Pistols discovering hardcore. It's got plenty of rage if you wanna burn down some buildings or whatever, but it also rocks like crazy. I love it.



By Sleazegrinder

Sex Organs

We're Fucked VOODOO RHYTHM

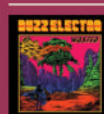


I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the two members of this mystery band wear penis and vagina costumes. Nobody knows who they are - not even them! - but they play hook-heavy, primitive rock'n'roll, like The Cramps if half the band wandered off somewhere. And all the songs are about sex, for better (*Fuck All The Time*) or worse (*Hair In My Mouth*). It's pretty fun.



Buzz Electro

Wasted SELF-RELEASED



A three-piece from Austin, Texas, Buzz Electro are killer grungedelic fuzz-bombers with a penchant for big, heavy hooks and flashy, arena-ready riffs, and this album is like the soundtrack to the summer you wish you had if you didn't blow it so badly in 1994. *Wasted* is just killer, groovy rock'n'roll action that will get your freak flags flying.





Sebastian Bach

Child Within The Man REIGNING PHOENIX

Impressive explosive return from one of metal's biggest fans.

If there is one moment that sums up Sebastian Bach, it comes during the recent Ronnie James Dio movie *Dreamers Never Die*. Invited to assess the one-time Black Sabbath and Dio vocalist Dio's late-period creative flourish with *Heaven And Hell*, Bach feverishly proclaims that band's *Bible Black* to be the greatest song Dio ever sang. When it plays, he loses his shit, instantly 18 again and lost in a haze of heavy-metal euphoria and voluntary neck damage.

An irrepressible big kid, with an even bigger voice, Sebastian Bach should probably have achieved more in the 28 years since he departed Skid Row with animosity fizzing in the air and decades of fruitless bickering ahead of him. A handful of good-to-great solo albums followed, but, just as his former band flailed around helplessly before the arrival of singer Erik Grönwall, Bach has been only an intermittent presence in the studio. Famously, he sings with such gusto that he once had to have a hernia operation. On *Child Within The Man*, his fifth solo album, he sounds firmly committed to having another one, but via some of the sharpest and most memorable songs he has sung in decades.

From the hell-for-leather brutality of *Everybody Bleeds* onwards, the album is an unapologetic celebration of what

Sebastian Bach does best. It opens with *Everybody Bleeds* (a brutal throwback to the steroidal sleaze-rock of those classic Skid Row albums), and *Freedom*, which features a synapse-throttling guitar solo by shred icon John 5 and kicks a near-unacceptable amount of arse in the process. Recent single *What Do I Got To Lose*, co-written by Myles Kennedy, is a gleaming glam-metal anthem with an absurd amount of swagger; *To Live Again* is a magnificently overwrought power ballad; both (*Hold On To The Dream* and *Hard Darkness* are doomed-out and imperious; the perfect backdrop for Bach's astonishing, seemingly ageless voice.

Appearances on the TV show *The Masked Singer* notwithstanding, *Child Within The Man* is clearly the most fun Bach has had in a long time. Unpredictable and alt.rock-tinged on *Vendetta*; touched by the hand of grunge on the sludgy *Crucify Me*; dotted with fret-bothering cameos (Steve Stevens and Orianthi work six-string miracles on *Future Of Youth* and the vicious and actually quite rude *F. U.* respectively), it sounds like the kind of bombastic and sonically monstrous record that a young, or indeed 55-year-old, Bach would absolutely lose his shit to. And rightly so.

Dom Lawson



Various

The Power Of The Heart: A Tribute To Lou Reed

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Respectful covers follow the leader.

What, no drill *Disco Mystic*? No one's reinterpreted *Sad Song* or *The Bells* calypso fashion? Almost by definition, tribute albums are set to get you arguing. Taste or tolerance for the featured artists will colour your judgement. If you're listening, you're already fond of the songs. Keith Richards would have to wander very far into wrongness to screw up *I'm Waiting For The Man*, and he doesn't, sounding sprightly without trying too hard. He's the obvious headline act, although Rickie Lee Jones handles *Walk On The Wild Side* with a wry blend of respect for the original and lilting, tipsy lounge jazz. Rufus Wainwright gets away with *Perfect Day* by toning down his usual extra-ness, while Joan Jett bashes through a no-nonsense *I'm So Free*. Lucinda Williams brings weathered gravitas to *Legendary Hearts*, adding genuine fresh perspective, and Roseanne Cash pulls rabbits from hats with *Magician*. The Afghan Whigs doing *I Love You Suzanne* is muddy but muscular, and of the up-and-comers' offerings, Brogan Bentley's take on the title song is the most soulful. Some new sensations here.

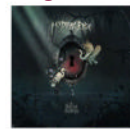
Chris Roberts

My Dying Bride

A Mortal Binding

NUCLEAR BLAST

More miserable missives from the grim northerners.



Set comfortably amid the moors of Yorkshire and moorings of doom-metal,

My Dying Bride have proudly embraced their reputation as Britain's most miserable band for more than 30 years. In that time they've traded in just about every shade of gloom – and indeed doom – across their 14-album career, becoming very adept at crafting gorgeously sumptuous gothic tracks as grandiose as they are grim.

A Mortal Binding is more of the same: glacial-paced, soul-crushing epics set on an endless death march while mournful violins keen overhead. The magic is in how *My Dying Bride* still make it sound so utterly enthralling. Aaron Stainthorpe's

morose vocal stylings coming as if from the bottom of the deepest, darkest pit. From the Lovecraftian-overtones of *Thornwyck Hymn* to the almost classical, baroque stylings of *The Apocalyptist* and *A Starving Heart*, *My Dying Bride* capture the ennui of a world that hasn't had the good sense to end.

Rich Hobson

Gospelbeach

Wiggle Your Fingers

CURATION

California leaning.



After three albums that ingeniously re-crafted elements of the

70s California rock scene with love and affection, *Gospelbeach* are apparently bowing out with a fourth that drags itself into the early 80s and looks back at the halcyon years with post-punk-tinted spectacles.

For *Gospelbeach* founder and West Coast obsessive Brent Rademaker, this was the time when he started seriously writing songs, so there was probably a sense of coming full circle as he applied the epic soft-focus production.

It's been expertly manicured so you can either lie back and float up, up and away on a breeze of pedal steel, or get up close to the speakers and check the references on *You're The Only One* (*Frozen Burrito #2*), which Neil Young era is evoked on *York Blvd*, the strangely happy sound on *Hang Thyme*, a song about suicide, and the contrasting parts to *The Dropouts Parts One And Two*: saccharine and spooky.

Hugh Fielder

P.O.D.

Veritas MASCOT

Eleventh album by platinum-selling juggernaut rockers, featuring guest artists.

Comprising vocalist Sonny Sandoval, guitarist Marcos Curiel and bassist Traa Daniels, P.O.D. have been churning out cranium-rattling, eyeball-popping, wrecking-ball electro-metal bangers for 30 years, interspersed with occasional pastoral interludes and faint nods to other genres. But this album is 95 per cent solid metal.

Drop, featuring Lamb Of God's Randy Blythe, with its injunction to 'set fire to the system', sets the tone; impending apocalypse and doom is a recurring theme on

Afraid To Die and *Lay Me Down*, though it would be unsurprising if P.O.D. were still making this music 30 years from now – life is long. *Closer Feeling Strange* sees them slow up, and feels like a genuine relief from their customary hellbent pace.



David Stubbs

Blacktop Mojo

Pollen CUHMION

Fifth studio set from grunge-informed southern rockers.



A decade into their career, this quintet from Texas have evidently

fine-tuned their sound to a polished and radio-friendly sheen, but on this fifth album most of the 11 tracks remain tantalisingly close-but-no-cowboy-hat to really grabbing the listener by the lapels. 'I had a drink with the devil tonight,' Matt James sings arrestingly as they apply the storytelling tradition of Nashville songwriting to the drinking-to-forget lament *Red Enough*, and the beefed up bro-country of *As The Light Fades* is similarly likeable. The Muscle Shoals-y brass that laces the southern rock of *Weary I Roam* lifts things again, but elsewhere they sound like a band a little too keen to finally make the commercial step up, impatient to launch into a singalong chorus but without having the conviction, charisma or strong enough hooks to drag us along for the ride.

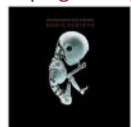


Johnny Sharp

Progressive Souls Collective

Sonic Rebirth METALVILLE

Second album by consortium of prog-metal players.



Founded in 2019 by Florian Zepf, Progressive Souls Collective

comprise musicians who have played with a range of more famous artists, including Joe Cocker, Phil Collins and Eric Clapton, but seek to come into their own here. With its embryo cover and general sense of existential grandiloquence, *Sonic Rebirth* seems to allude vaguely and ennoblingly to the life cycle thingy, but if its progressing it's progressing back to 1972 and the era of conceptual rock follies.

Comprising eight parts, each bleeding into the next, these tracks can feel like races to the

final chorus in which the players test each other's virtuoso mettle. There are occasional dashes of colour, such as the uilleann pipes of *Part 1*, and *Part IV* has a certain knitted fury that's faintly reminiscent of Eno's *Blank Frank*, but mostly this is so much Byzantine noodling and jet-black, muddy-brown washes of fast guitar. At 45 minutes, however, it's at least economical.



David Stubbs

Acid Mammoth

Supersonic Megafauna

Collision HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

Athens's psychedelic doom lords rumble anew.

Doom metal has become increasingly diverse and experimental over the years, but Acid Mammoth are proudly sticking to the script. Following in the footsteps of three highly rated albums, *Supersonic Megafauna Collision* delivers a slightly more refined version of the Greek quartet's skull-lelling Sabbath-isms, but the object of the exercise is still to reduce everything to smoking rubble in the name of The Riff.

Acid Mammoth have a mischievous side, and it emerges through horror-style organ flourishes during *Fuzzorgasm (Keep On Screaming)* and the oddball angularity of frontman Chris Babalis Jr's melodies, most notably during the grim, slow-motion slurry of *Garden Of Bones*. The band's primary purpose is none-more-classic stoner doom, however, and the baked-o-meter truly begins to smoke during the epic *Tusko's Last Trip*, which meanders restlessly for 12 minutes with palpably malevolent intent and a mounting sense of sweaty, chemically compromised dread. Excellent, red-eyed times all round, then.



Dom Lawson

High On Fire

Cometh The Storm MNKR HEAVY

Stoner-doom veterans reignite the spark on first album in six years.



Matt Pike is an institution. Like Lemmy if Lemmy was frequently

shirtless and high on weapons-grade marijuana and acid, this roaring, snarling malcontent has spent more than 30 years manning the stoner-metal barricades, first as guitarist with

weed worshippers Sleep, and for the past 25 years as the barrel-chested leader of High On Fire.

Cometh The Storm finds Pike returning to the motherhood from a busman's holiday of a solo career. It's like he's never been away; *Lambspread* and *Trismegistus* sound like a brawl in a biker bar, powered by Pike's angry rhinoceros bellow and a drum barrage that rushes in like the oncoming apocalypse. It's not entirely aggro – there are a few fleeting seconds where the noise lets up, such as on closing track *Darker Fleece* – but it's mostly aggro.

Cometh The Storm won't take anyone by surprise, but sometimes the best things in life are the most familiar.



Dave Everley

Paraorchestra

Death Songbook WORLD CIRCUIT

Songs of mortality, loss and transcendence, edgily orchestrated.



The reaper? Not to be feared, it seems.

Conductor Charles Hazlewood, artistic director of the Paraorchestra, a pioneering ensemble incorporating disabled players and modern instrumentation, here concocts a collection of "delicate re-clothings" covers of songs relating to death in all its forms – physical, romantic, even merely tonal – in collaboration with Suede's Brett Anderson, a man not unfamiliar with the graceful sweep of the melodic scythe.

Several Anderson tracks are reworked, with the orchestra bringing a plaintive space to *The Next Life*, finding austere power in *Unsung* and accentuating the Arabian texture of *He's Dead* en route to a Goat-like freak-out. Deploying such shifts from tensile atmospherics to avant rock flourish, the Paraorchestra expose mournful undercurrents to Echo & The Bunnymen's *The Killing Moon* and Depeche Mode's *Enjoy The Silence*.

Meanwhile Mercury Rev's *Holes*, Skeeter Davis's *The End Of The World* (with Nadine Shah providing show-stopping guest vocals) and a harpsichord-led take on Black's *Wonderful Life* are rendered as transcendent, heart-wringing elegies.

A record destined to be dearly beloved.



Mark Beaumont

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Alien Airforce

Give Pigeons The Right Of Way EASY ACTION

There are very few instantly recognisable guitar-artists, but ex-Daisy Chainsaw Crispin Gray (with his agelessly diabolic, soul-searing sonic scalpel) is one of them. AA's debut is a six-string-centred tour de force, but Gray's voice and hooks invariably play second fiddle. **7/10**

James Baker & The Groundbreakers

Born To Rock IN THE RED

Septugenarian ex-Hoodoo Gurus/Beasts Of Bourbon/Scientists drummer Baker was most certainly born to rock. Though sadly he wasn't born to sing. That said, anything he lacks in technique he more than makes up for in heart. **6/10**

Rick Monroe & The Hitman

Six Gun Soul TLG/VIRGIN

Positively dripping with the sort of down-home, yee-haw, Southern-friendly, mainstream genre-straddling, blue-jean country-rock populism that's little short of ear-worm catnip to middle-America's streaming community, RM&TH surprise few while satisfying plenty. **7/10**

Les Savy Fav

Oui, LSF FRENCHISS

Pretty much post-everything, those Tim Harrington-fronted Favs return after a release-free decade with 14 satisfying shots of NYC punk-informed, Beasties-esque, quintessentially Brooklyn loft art-rock. Snotty, minimal, sparky; so much more than worth the wait. **8/10**

Pat Todd & The Rank Outsiders

Keepin' Chaos At Bay HOUND GAWD!

Ex-Lazy Cowgirls vocalist Todd, is so wholly entrenched in full-tilt unhinged Stones/Saints/Heartbreakers rock'n'roll that his press blurb boasts testimonials from Eddie Spaghetti and Blaine Cartwright, so you really don't need me to tell you how unreconstructedly ace this is. **8/10**

Vanderwolf

The Great Bewilderment ANOTHER RECORD LABEL

Another self-exploratory dystopian zeitgeist-precis born of lockdown, this time from ex-Last Man Standing vocalist Max Vanderwolf, built on ambitious lush soundscapes, but weirdly lacking in the vocal department. Channelling David Bowie: not as easy as it looks. **7/10**

Furlined

Kill Devil Hill CONCAVE

Satisfyingly equidistant to Richard Hawley's rich baritone fragility and the American gothic tones of Violent Femmes, Furlined (fronted by formerly Visconti championed, Edwyn Collins-toned Neil Crossley) particularly score with a subtly evocative *He Drives A Hillman*. **7/10**

Upploppet

Road Runner THE SIGN

In the late 70s, a certain Swedish demographic fell simultaneously in love with both Kiss and the Sex Pistols, and as a consequence no one does punk-infected sleaze-rock quite like the Swedes. Take Gothenburg's Upploppet: hard, fast, furious, flash. Fabulous. **8/10**

Talk Show

Effigy MISSING PIECE

There's an awful lot going on here. Deploying a deliciously random music-library-shuffle's-worth of influences to dizzying seamless effect, London's Talk Show coolly entrance while always sounding appealingly and uniquely ahead of the post-rock-electro-pop game. **8/10**

Drahla

Angeltape CAPTURED TRACKS

Leeds-based art-rock experimentalists Drahla, possibly the ultimate exponents of tight-but-loose extant, make strictly disciplined, saxed-up fractured funk squonk-honk rackets sound instinctive, effortless. Luciel Brown's deadpan helps fuel the no-wave madness. **7/10**

Loyal Cheaters

And All Hell Broke Loose GO DOWN

Lip-curling Runaways/Scandosleaze/'DC-indebted action-rockers Loyal Cheaters may self-identify as an Italo-German turbo punk'n' roll band, a blah marriage between evil forces of yadda-yadda... You get the picture? What they actually are is this year's NY Loose. Ace. **7/10**

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES



AC/DC

Reissues COLUMBIA/SONY LEGACY

Another opportunity to buy into one of the greatest rock back catalogues of all time.



It's a long way to the top if you wanna rock'n'roll and all that, and AC/DC have been at the top for a very long while, their status as legends unquestioned and unchallenged. We've had 50 years of (mostly) incredible high-voltage rock'n'roll from human livewire Angus Young and co. since their official debut on New Year's Eve in 1973 at Chequers nightclub in Sydney, the anniversary providing an excuse to fire off a mighty salvo of nine limited-edition reissues – based on the 2003 remasters – pressed in gold vinyl (with a couple of exclusive colour pressings limited to HMV in the UK), complemented by an LP-sized art print “suitable for framing” (it says here), and that's yer lot. More reissues are planned for later in the year.

Sounds simple, although the albums chosen for the first wave of reissues might cause some puzzlement. From the peerless Bon Scott era we have *High Voltage* (8/10), *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap* (8/10), *Powerage* (9/10) and *Highway To Hell* (9/10) – no *Let There Be Rock*, no *If You Want Blood*. Then we start jumping around the Brian Johnson era with *Back In Black* (10/10), *For Those About To Rock (We Salute You)* (8/10), *Who Made Who* (7/10), *The Razor's Edge* (7/10) and *Live* (7/10).

Album choice aside, you have to wonder at the thinking behind these reissues. “Money for old rope,” the cynical will cry. But fans don't have to shell out if they don't want to. Or just pick your favourite album and buy that if you really feel you have to go for gold. It's just that compared to the efforts some other bands go to celebrating significant anniversaries, this is basically format tinkering. And pretty though these reissues are, fans value new music, something that would enhance the band's extraordinary canon (see what we did there?). We could have had something like 1997's *Bonfire* or 2009's *Backtracks* box sets. After all, AC/DC have many, many hours of mythical demos and gigs from which to curate – the entire *Bondi Lifesaver* from 1977, anyone? Seriously, who would rather be framing an LP-sized art print instead? Then again, maybe a from-the-vaults mega-binge is around the corner and these reissues are just the hors d'oeuvres, although that's doubtful. For diehard AC/DC collectors, these reissues will doubtless be electrifying, wallet-emptying catnip. For everyone else these classic albums are readily available in far more mundane and budget-friendly formats.

Essi Berelian

Sparks

No.1 In Heaven LIL BEETHOVEN

Return of a landmark album.



The outrage when Sparks – once a smarty-pants glamorous rock band, LA's

answer to Roxy Music – reinvented themselves as a synth duo (when there was no such thing as a synth duo) seems extraordinary now. But in an era of Real Rock and Death To Disco, the Mael brothers appeared to be not so much swimming against the tide of authentic proper music as urinating in its hair. Nowadays, though, *No. 1 In Heaven*, produced by Giorgio Moroder, stands as a pioneering experiment and commercial success. Moroder's sequencer, Russell Mael's soaring vocals and Ron Mael's sharp lyrics and appearance all combined to create something new and bizarrely brilliant: a machine-age symphony that owed as much to Noel Coward as it did to Donna Summer. Kraftwerk themselves never bettered Sparks' vision of a robotised world: from *Beat The Clock* to *Tryouts For The Human Race*, the album prefigured the digital age while making the loss of the soul and lack of individuality sound fun and danceable. The next decade would be full of emotive singers accompanied by stone-faced synth players, as everyone from Yazoo to Soft Cell and Eurythmics to Erasure embraced electronics, but Sparks were the first to make this new pop.

Released on vinyl as an anniversary treat, *No.1 In Heaven* is joined by Noel's lost classic *Is There More To Life Than Dancing?* (7/10), an album produced and written by the Maels, which lacks Moroder's touch but is still worth owning: disco and style combined in one long, epic mix.

David Quantick

Brian Eno

Eno: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack UMC

Avant-rock icon shares riches old and new on classy, career-spanning compilation.

Squeezing Brian Eno's half-century-plus career as composer, collaborator and sonic explorer into a single compilation was never going to be easy. Billed as the soundtrack to Gary Hustwit's experimental documentary portrait *Eno*, which remixes itself with each viewing, this anthology is more selective

overview than definitive 'hits' collection. That said, it covers an admirably broad range, from scouring proto-punk bangers like *Third Uncle* to lush ambient reveries, glitchy sci-fi lullabies and warm-blooded electro-gospel spirituals. Guest players include krautrock legends Cluster, fellow soundscaper Daniel Lanois, modish trance-pop DJ Fred Again, and more.

Inevitably there are major omissions here. Nothing from Eno's immortal Roxy, Bowie, Talking Heads or U2 collaborations, for example, although David Byrne features on the twitchy ethno-funk number *Regiment* from the duo's landmark 1981 avant-world album *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*, and again on the radiant *Everything That Happens* from 2008. Three previously unreleased tracks are all excellent, especially the sonorous, heart-tugging, wistfully nostalgic ballad *All I Remember* and the brassy, percussive, wonk-jazz *Lighthouse #429*. A softly tumbling *By This River*, performed live at the Acropolis with Eno's brother Roger on piano, makes for a luminous finale.

Rightly resisting the temptation to highlight a single genre or era, this is a rich, classy, forward-thinking collection.

Stephen Dalton

Anton Barbeau

An Introduction To

FRUITS DE MER

Cult compiled.



From Sacramento, but most of the time based in Europe, Anton

Barbeau has been making albums for more than 30 years without threatening to rattle any mainstream cages. *An Introduction To* isn't quite the freewheeling retrospective the title promises. Instead it's a collection of more recent music for the Fruits De Mer label. No matter, it's a reasonable take on who Barbaue is: an appealing voice, a lover of psychedelic pop, a Robyn Hitchcock maven and, as *Sometimes I Was A Pretty Girl* suggests, a whimsical wit.

He's not really a covers artist, but nine of these 19 tracks are by others. There's the obscure, such as *Dr Crippen's Waiting Room* by Crouch End's Orange Bicycle; the predictable: an imagination-free take on

Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust*; and the intriguing: his version of Julian Cope's *Out Of My Mind On Dope* & *Speed* stomps even harder than the original.

Barbeau's own songs, particularly *When I Was 46 (In The Year 13)* and *Secretion Of The Wafer*, are heroically catchy, overflowing with squalling guitars and the sense that with a less basic production he could have eased into Jason Falkner/Jason Mraz territory.

■■■■■■■■■■

John Aizlewood

Black Sabbath

Anno Domini 1989-1995

BMG

Sabbath's lost albums resurrected.



In contrast to later victory-lap reunions with Ozzy and Dio, the four long-deleted, vibrantly remastered albums resurrected in *Anno Domini* chart an under-appreciated chapter in Black Sabbath's story, much of which found lone original member Tony Iommi keeping the band name alive, having initially been pressured to do so by label and management for his *Seventh Star*

(1986) solo album. The notion of an Iommi-only Sabbath proved controversial among fans, but with gifted new vocalist Tony Martin (retained from 1987's chaotic *Eternal Idol* period), long-serving keyboard player Geoff Nicholls and new member Cozy Powell (drums), Iommi defied the odds with *Headless Cross* (1989), a formidable comeback. The guitarist delivers an abundance of vicious riffs (*When Death Calls*, *Nightwing*), framed with Martin's melodic roar, and with a characteristically bombastic performance from Powell.

Tyr (1990), featuring Powell's former Whitesnake bandmate Neil Murray on bass, proved it wasn't a fluke. Iommi and Martin's potent songwriting partnership frequently ignites (*Anno Mundi*, *Jerusalem*), and the material is driven home by the rhythm section's attack. *Cross Purposes* (1994), recorded by Iommi, fellow founder Geezer Butler, Martin and Powell's Rainbow replacement Bobby Rondinelli, holds up well, boasting several fiery sleeper gems (*Immaculate Deception*, *I Witness*), but was overshadowed on release by the ill-fated Dio reunion of

1991-92. Finally, Iommi's thunderous remix of the *Tyr* line-up's 1995 reunion album *Forbidden* (originally neutered by a thin production) allows the quality of its songs (*Guilty As Hell*, *Forbidden*) to shine.

Anno Domini 1989-1995 highlights an intensely creative chapter of Sabbath history that's ripe for re-evaluation

■■■■■■■■■■

Rich Davenport

Bruce Springsteen

Best Of SONY MUSIC

Demand for The Boss is seemingly inexhaustible.



According to Wiki, 20 studio albums, 77 singles, eight EPs, 23 live albums, seven box sets, eight compilation albums... the first artist to have a US Top 5 album in six consecutive decades. If you're a Bruce fan, you're hardly going to be disappointed with a new collection titled *Best Of*, are you? You know exactly what you're going to get.

All that's left to argue over is the inclusions or omissions. Of course, *Born To Run*, the Right-baiting *Born In The USA*, the

chest-baring *Thunder Road* and the unstoppable groove of *Hungry Heart* are here. So too are *Badlands*, the career-reinventing *Streets Of Philadelphia*, the deep soul of *The Ghost Of Tom Joad*, the moments for quiet and a sort of mournful desperation in between early crowd-pleasers like 1973's *Rosalita (Come Out Tonight)* and 1984's era-defining *Dancing In The Dark*. And of course there are a couple of mandatory newer tracks: *Hello Sunshine* (from 2019's *Western Stars*) and the epic *Letter To You* (2020). Nothing wrong with that. Bruce needs to feel he can stay fresh and relevant among all the tumultuous singalongs and anthemic posing and celebrity sightings.

If you're a Bruce fan, you can't go wrong really with this collection: 18 tracks on a two-LP/single-CD set, 31 on the digital deluxe set (which seems strangely weighted), pure Boss adrenaline from beginning to end, and if a couple of the final tracks seem to grate a little (*Girls In Their Summer Clothes* - really?) so what? There's more than enough magic here to keep the blood pumping.

■■■■■■■■■■

Everett True

Sons Of Angels

Sons Of Angels BAD REPUTATION

Could have been huge.



Sounding like it should have easily sold a million, this self-titled debut

from talented Scandinavians Sons Of Angels probably would have taken off big-time had they released it a couple of years earlier rather than 1990.

Produced by the band and Kevin Elson (Journey, Mr. Big, Europe, you get the picture), every track positively radiates good-time vibes, all cowboy boots, big hair and knackered denim.

Kicking off with the cheeky, MTV-bothering anthem *Cowgirl*, the album rapidly reveals more interesting songwriting chops in *Trance Dance*, the slinky groove of *Would You Die For Me?*, the furiously buzzing *Rock & Roll Star* and a fast 'n' funky *Fight*. There are some decent slowies, too, in *Lonely Rose* and the shades-of-Whitesnake *Could It Be Love*. The addition of bouncy bonus track *Black Desire* is a bit incidental, really, but it does mean you're getting a bit more bang for your hair-metal buck.

■■■■■■■■■■

Essi Berelian

Alice Cooper

Billion Dollar Babies (50th Anniv) RHINO

Triple-vinyl Golden Jubilee expansion of Cooper magnum opus.



If you've got an original '73 *Billion Dollar Babies* knocking about the place, with its cannily conceived rabbits-lyrics-dosh inner sleeve, massive Billion Dollar note (neatly folded next to 11 press-out-'n'-shuffle bubblegum-styled picture cards), in a beautifully rendered garish green, faux snakeskin embossed wallet, you'll not feel particularly moved to replace it any time soon with this painstakingly buffed 'n' bloated Golden Jubilee replica.

Until you see it, that is. And feel its not insignificant (805 gram or, for pre-punk readers, 1lb 12³/₈oz) triple-vinyl heft. And trip your fingertips across its seductively emboldened reptilian scales. Of course, it's been significantly celebrated before: expanded to double-CD in '01, with 11 extra triple-guitar-driven (Glen Buxton and Michael Bruce with additional sound-fattening ornaturne from Mick Mashbir) live tracks from a pair of Texas dates on 1973's B\$B tour, along with three out-takes (an alternative *Generation Landslide* and two versions of NME flexi promo *Slick Black Limousine*). So how exactly are Rhino planning to tempt you from your hard-earned

cash this time? What's so great about this alleged Trillion Dollar reboot?

Physically? Not a lot. Six extra tracks, four of them previously available: an EP's worth, basically; single mix/edits of *Hello Hooray*, *Billion Dollar Babies*, *Elected* and *Mary Ann*; a pair of additional lives (*School's Out* and *Under My Wheels*, again from Texas '73) and an oral history/making-of booklet. Sonically? The remaster's crisp, revealing, punchy, but more so than in '01? To these ears there's a hairsbreadth in it. If that.

It's the packaging that'll swing it for upgraders.

Those new to The Coop's ultimate statement as an album artist shouldn't hesitate. The core record's constituent material, Bob Ezrin's immensely ambitious maximalist production and the band's performances (and Alice Cooper were still very much a band at this stage of the game) are reliably flawless. The live take of My



Stars is simply extraordinary, and the single incarnation of *Elected* entirely essential.

Billion Dollar Babies isn't just another record, it's a sonic portal into the most enduring and potent strain of morally bankrupt, juvenile delinquency known to humanity (I know... I was that soldier), and for that at least, we should all be truly thankful.

■■■■■■■■■■

Ian Fortnam



Def Leppard

Pyromania (40th Anniv. Edition) MERCURY

The difficult third album, which lit the blue touch-paper for the band.



Not long after the album was released in January 1983, *Pyromania* looked to be Def Leppard's ultimate hit. Next album *Hysteria* changed that, but *Pyromania* remains their second-biggest seller. Sales of just over 10 million – only a couple of platinum discs behind its follow-up – paint *Pyromania* as *Hysteria*'s snotty little brother. Fewer hits, less time on MTV for sure, but... rockier. The one that it's cooler to love.

Its creation, though, was ridiculously fraught. Producer Mutt Lange's legendary quest for perfection led to constant re-recording and overdubs that drove every member of the band crazy at some point. Equally painful was taking the decision midway through to sack founding guitarist Pete Willis for his increasingly dysfunctional behaviour. Fortunately the choice of Phil Collen as replacement proved inspired – meaning that *Pyromania* still sounds stunning 40 years on.

The deluxe version, in a vinyl album-sized box, includes four CDs, a large-format book (ace notes by CR's Paul Elliott) plus a Blu-ray (containing Atmos/5.1/Stereo/instrumental mixes, and five promo videos). CD1 presents the original 10-song album, remastered. *Rock Rock (Till You Drop)*, *Photograph*, *Stagefright*, *Too Late For Love*, *Die Hard The Hunter*, *Foolin'*, *Rock Of Ages*, *Billy's Got A Gun*... sheesh, what a hot

streak. Even 'the other two', *Comin' Under Fire* and *Action! Not Words*, hold up well.

CD2 is the cherry here, though. On it are 22 rarities including 'the long lost unfinished eleventh track' *No You Can't Do That*, with a swaggering melody but, sadly, no vocals. Equally intriguing are six short untitled instrumental demos that reveal the band riffing, searching, digging for diamonds. Then come demos of five songs that emerged, raw but laden with promise. Finally, rough mixes of all 10 *Pyromania* tracks, in album order. 'Rough' is a relative term, given that they are Mutt Lange works-in-progress, but some reveal where Leppard actually dialled back on his embellishments.

Also in the box are two live CDs. One of them – a 15-song set from the LA Forum in September 1983 – is great, but was previously released in 2009 as part of the *Pyromania Deluxe Edition*. The other – a six-song set from December 1983, when Leppard were halfway up a seven-band festival bill in Dortmund, Germany – is previously unreleased, and utterly fierce.

As well as various vinyl configurations, there's also a two-CD version that pairs the remasters with just 11 of the Rarities and four LA Forum tracks... But the four-CD box is 'only' £75, so spoil yourself.



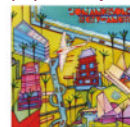
Neil Jeffries

Jon Anderson

In The City Of Angels

FLOATING WORLD

Anderson marks his second departure from Yes by going pop – badly.



Jon Anderson's *In The City Of Angels* was released just a dozen years

after his extraordinary debut *Olias Of Sunhallow*, but the two albums could have been recorded aeons apart. The former sounded as if it were beamed in from another planet, the latter as if it were grown in a laboratory petri dish, its sub-Trevor Horn production as crisp and clinical as *Olias* had been other-worldly and organic. The playing is faultless – having Toto as your backing band will do that – but the music is neutered, anonymous and, well, boring.

There are moments of life. The keyboards that open *Sundancing (For The Hopi/ NavaJo Energy)* briefly threaten to elevate proceedings, before being buried beneath synthesised calypso cheese. The chorus of *New Civilization* soars but cannot entirely escape the faux-samba that underpins the verses and the antiseptic horn parps that punctuate everything else. Only on the album's final two songs – the swaying *Top Of The World (The Glass Bead Game)*, which sounds like something Kate Bush could have come up with, and Christmas-hit-in-disguise *Hurry Home (Song From The Pleiades)* – does Anderson let his imagination off the leash rather than tether it to the studio toys.



Fraser Lewry

Carl Palmer

Fanfare For The Common Man BMG

Three CDs, one Blu-ray disc, a 200-page book. Why? Why not, more like.



Now the leader of (the keyboards-free) ELP Legacy, Carl

Palmer can still wallop out a drum solo that would exhaust someone decades his junior. That said, at the age of 74, after 60 years on the drum stool, it's probably time to take some kind of stock. Hence this smorgasbord of delights.

There's a disc of Emerson, Lake & Palmer, of course, *Beyond Fanfare For The Common Man*,

and quite rightly it's the more percussive fare, and in the shape of the overlooked but whizz-bang *Canario* there's even something from *Love Beach*. Four of the six tracks that comprised Palmer's side of *Works Volume One* are included, and he's truly startling on *L.A. Nights*.

There's another disc of more recent Carl Palmer Band and ELP Legacy material, which shows he can still breathe new life into the ELP canon. Is it better? Of course not. Is it a worthy parallel? Absolutely.

In between there are tracks featuring Palmer, from 1966's *I Must Be Mad* by The Craig (his first single), to a joyful guest slot with his hero Buddy Rich. Taking the scenic route, we get to Asia, Mike Oldfield, Atomic Rooster, P.M., Chris Farlowe and 3. The Blu-ray disc is an "audio visual documentary", and the book is the closest we'll get to an autobiography.

Overshadowed by bickering, excess and daftness, ELP don't quite have the respect they deserve. And even there, Palmer was always regarded as the third of three. *Fanfare For The Common Man* should right that particular wrong.



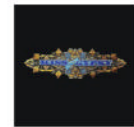
John Aizlewood

Kiss Of The Gypsy

Kiss Of The Gypsy

BAD REPUTATION

Pucker up for this expanded early-90s gem.



Yet another of those 'what could have been' stories, Blackpool's Kiss

Of The Gypsy fell victim to record company indifference, not to mention the early-90s swing to grunge, and never recovered, managing one very promising album before their dreams of stadium domination were dashed.

There's quality stamped all over the 1992 debut. With guitarist/singer Tony Mitchell as chief songwriter, the coherence of its 10 tracks of bluesy, melodic rock is undeniable, from full-on rockers like *Whatever It Takes* and the sleazy *Infatuation*, to ballad *Take This Old Heart*, and *No Prize For The Loser* with its gospel-choir chorus, the variety and ambition is impressive.

Making the original release even more worthy of exploration, this reissue adds six very fine B-side bonus tracks, some of

which could easily have graced the album. *Light Of Day*, *Straight Talk* and *Tough Enough* are raunchy, riffy upbeat stompers, *Always In My Heart* is a mellow slide-guitar-driven ballad, album track *Easy Does It* gets an acoustic makeover, and *Infatuation* is remixed into a thumpingly heavy eight-minute epic. On the strength of the debut, the follow-up would have been quite something.



Essi Berelian

Thunder

Expanded reissues BMG

First-time vinyl/CD digipack versions, each with four bonus tracks.



The glory days of Thunder's first two albums seemed long gone when a seventh – cunningly titled *The Magnificent Seventh* (7/10) and packaged in spaghetti-western-styled artwork – was released in February 2005. It was, though, a marked improvement on numbers three to six, if only for the evergreen *I Love You More Than Rock 'N' Roll* and *You Can't Keep A Good Man Down*. This version adds four live tracks, three newly available.

Thunder upped their game again for its successor, *Robert Johnston's Tombstone* (2006, 8/10) which peaked with *The Devil Made Me Do It*, *Dirty Dream* and *Last Man Standing*. Best bonus tracks here are *Don't Worry About Tomorrow*, a soulful out-take polished by female backing vocals, and former B-side *I'm In Heaven* that somehow channels both the Blues Brothers and Deep Purple.

Better still was 'farewell' album *Bang!* (2008, 9/10). Extras here include a couple from *The Joy Of Six* EP and a live cover of *Delilah*, but the 12 originals would suffice. Naming the best of *Bang!* is a challenge. On *The Radio*, the Zeppelin-esque *Stormwater* and *Love Sucks* are obvious candidates, then there's *Carol Ann*, *One Bullet*, *Turn Left At California* and the jazzy *Retribution*. Quality at every turn.

Neil Jeffries

The Rain Parade

Emergency Third Rail Power Trip SI RECORDINGS

A shower of sublime brilliance. Swimming in the creative pool of early-80s LA that spawned hair-metal was another shoal of jangly bands in thrall to Arthur

Lee's Love and The Byrds, with a touch of Television thrown in, tagged the Paisley Underground. Alongside The Dream Syndicate and The Bangles, The Rain Parade were not even the biggest fish in the local pond. Instead ripples found their way to the UK, where their debut LP *Emergency Third Rail Power Trip* was revered as a *Revolver* for the 80s by the suede-jacketed, winkle-picker-shoed brigade documented in Sam Knee's excellent book *A Scene In Between*.

Led by David Roback and Matt Piucci, the quintet's chiming guitars, haunting melodies and gloomy lyrics ideally suited our 'rain grey towns'. Indeed they inspired one inhabitant, Alan McGee of Glasgow, to launch Creation Records. The original LP stands up as timelessly hypnotic, but sadly the bonus LP doesn't add much for anyone other than avid collectors, although live versions of *Paper Girl* and *Speedway* are energetic, if primitive.

To hear the band at full psychedelic power, go to 1984's excellent *Beyond The Sunset* live LP. The lurking beast of MTV wiped out everything but the glossy, garish and gormless, so it's satisfying that The Rain Parade's sublime, subtle classic is ripe for rediscovery.

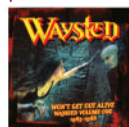


Claudia Elliott

Waysted

Won't Get Out Alive: Waysted Volume One 1983-1986 CHERRY RED

Pete Way's musical-chairs post-UFO band, boxed up.



Despite forming due to celebrated bass bon viveur Pete Way's contractual obligation to turn out an album for Chrysalis Records after leaving UFO in 1982, and although it saw a revolving-door line-up of former UFO acolytes and ambitious young blades, Waysted's original incarnation (they would re-form in the 2000s) had their moments, as evidenced by this collection.

"I wanted to keep it really loud," Way is quoted as saying about debut album *Vices*, and that might be why it still has a strangely cavernous sound, as if being listened to in an empty venue. Tracks such as *Love Loaded* and *Sleazy* retain a stomping cock-rock swagger, though, and material from that

album and the self-titled 1984 mini-LP that followed sounds even better on the handful of live recordings included here, with guitar solos from Paul Chapman sounding as frantic as if he was trying to cram in as many notes as possible in the few minutes he expected to be in the band.

The Good, The Bad And The Waysted (1985) tried to modernise, and makes a decent fist of muscling in on Bryan Adams territory on *Heaven Tonight*, but when they go full pompadour on 1986's *Save Your Prayers*, now with able but anonymous new vocalist Danny Vaughn, the results are underwhelmingly generic.



Johnny Sharp

Linkin Park

Papercuts WARNER BROS

Nu-metal superstars' 'greatest hits' collection.



Few bands dominated the 21st century quite like Linkin Park. Their inarguably brilliant debut album, 2000's 10-million selling *Hybrid Theory*, wrapped nu-metal angst in poppy, industrial-lite tunes, turning the LA six-piece into a gateway band for a generation of rock fans, like Bon Jovi had done a decade and a half earlier.

This 20-track 'best of' compilation is the perfect summation of their career. It understandably leans heavily on *Hybrid Theory* and only marginally less-great follow-up *Meteora* – *Crawling*, *One Step Closer* and *In The End* from the former are pretty much perfect, while the latter's *Faint* and *Somewhere I Belong* aren't far behind. Subsequent albums found the band gradually drifting away from their roots – final album *One More Light* (represented here by the title track) was pretty much a modern pop album – but whatever they did it came from a desire to not stand still.

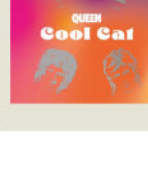
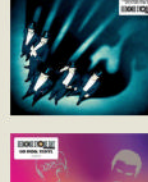
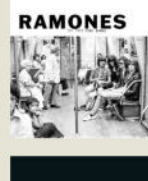
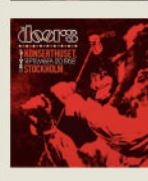
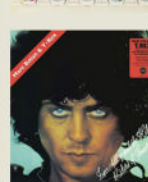
The tragedy of it all is that co-frontman Chester Bennington's death in 2017 meant Linkin Park never got a chance to become elder statesmen, and a previously unreleased song, the graceful and moving *Friendly Fire*, adds to the sense of poignancy. Still, providing the soundtrack to a generation is a hell of a legacy to have left behind.



Dave Everley

RECORD STORE DAY RELEASES

Fan-fleeing, vendor-supporting industry bean feast celebrates its seventeenth year.



Whether you physically fetch up to your local independent vinyl emporium on April 20 or scout about for the leftovers (and there will be leftovers, some of these beauties are being pressed in runs upward of 18,000 copies) online or in person, there really is an awful lot to choose from in this year's moveable circa-Easter Black-Friday-esque feast.

Picture-disc aficionados can freshen their galleries with Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* (Rhino, 8/10), X-Ray Spex's odd-socked punk-era essential *Germ Free Adolescents* (Secret, 8/10) or T.Rex's *Zinc Alloy & The Hidden Riders Of Tomorrow* (Demon, 6/10).

Coloured-vinyl fetishists can delight in a broad array of contrasting hues from The Doors' triple *Live At Konserthuset, Stockholm September 20, 1968* (Rhino, 7/10) in translucent blue, At The Drive-In's feral '98 live-in-studio *In/Casino/Out* (Craft, 8/10) in purple 'n' smoke green, a double clear Faces *BBC Session Recordings* (Rhino, 8/10) capturing turn-of-the-70s *Top Gear* and Dave Lee Travis sessions, and a (safe as) milky-clear double deluxe version of Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band's *The Spotlight Kid* complete with alternatives and out-takes (Rhino, 8/10), to the Ramones' unsurprising 1975 *Sire Demos* (Rhino, 7/10) on clear and splatter-black and The Sisters Of Mercy's first two seminal Stooges-go-goth EPs *Body And Soul* and *Walk Away* (Rhino, 7/10) packaged together on blue galaxy vinyl.

The Hives, meanwhile, have doubled down on the coloured-vinyl front with *Lex Hives + Live From Terminal 5* on double pink and *Black And White* on, you guessed it, black and white with poster (both Interscope, both 8/10), while Mudhoney's *Suck You Dry* box set spreads their corporate Reprise years across five LPs, all in different colours, for a fuck-me-that's-sick 160 quid (Rhino 6/10). And for those with more modest resources there's always the pink vinyl seven-inch of Queen's *Hot Space*-era B-side *Cool Cat* (EMI, 6/10). Black vinyl still tickling your fancy? David Bowie's *Waiting In The Sky* (Parlophone, 9/10) restores *Ziggy Stardust* to its provisional track-listing with four alternative tracks fans already own to largely pointless effect, and there's a veritable Gene Clark bonanza with *The Lost Studio Sessions 1964-'82* (Liberation Hall, 7/10) and a double, demo-packed, golden-anniversary selection of *No Other Sessions* (4AD, 8/10).

Ian Fortnam



The Beach Boys

The Beach Boys GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

Weighty, authorised, quote-heavy history of 'America's favourite band'.



In 1958, 16-year old Hawthorne High School quarterback Brian Wilson wrote in a neatly handwritten essay titled 'My Philosophy': "I don't want to settle with a mediocre life, but make a name for myself in my life's work, which I hope will be music." That this extraordinary piece of ephemera is included in *The Beach Boys* says an awful lot about just how much access has been afforded to its publishers by the Wilson family and their core band, widely adjudged to be America's greatest.

Brian, Dennis and Carl Wilson's parents were amateur musicians. Steeped in music (and under the influence of a father whose long-thwarted ambitions could now only come to fruition vicariously), the clear-voiced teenage trio would harmonise themselves to sleep like an adolescent Californian hybrid of the Von Trapps and the Waltons. Left to his own devices, Brian might well have decided to serve up tightly arranged saccharine love songs – all achingly unrequited this and painfully hormonal that – for years to come. But as luck would have it, his floppy-fringed, granite-jawed, fearfully handsome younger brother Dennis was currently obsessed with both surfing and dragsters. So Brian was (temporarily) saved from his innate romantic inclinations, and decided instead to write a song about surfing called... wait for it... *Surfin'*.

Brian was so serious about a future in music that he "rented a guitar and bass", brought cousin Mike Love and school chum Al Jardine into the fraternal fold, ordered five matching shirts and invented The Beach Boys. Five years later the group delivered both *Pet Sounds* and *Good Vibrations* because Brian, it turned out, was some kind of pop genius.

This handsomely bound, 392-page compendium (ostensibly 'by' the Beach Boys) blends archival cuttings and photographs with cut-and-paste band-member quotes that serve to tell their story.

There's little insight into their interpersonal relationships and private lives, it's their work that's at centre stage (yet while *Pet Sounds* is fine-tooth-combed, *Smile's* fascinating story is relatively scant). Its chronological format is punctuated by comments from high-profile contemporaries, some more insightful than others: "The Kinks played several outdoor concerts with The Beach Boys. The shows were always eventful for one reason or another" offers Ray Davies.

Anything this 'authorised' was never going to drip with salacious revelation, but, for hard-core fans with 50 quid in their pocket, *The Beach Boys* offers a controversy-free treasure trove.

★★★★★
Ian Fortnam

Chopping Wood

Pete Seeger with David Bernz JAWBONE

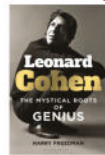
Reminiscences and stories by great American folk hero. Compiled by friend and associate David Bernz, this is not a conventional biography, but rather a compilation of Pete Seeger's thoughts across a range of topics. Seeger was a towering, missionary icon of socialist and pacifist principle, selfless and active to the end of his justly long life, one of America's most avuncular figures. Taking in Einstein, Leadbelly, President Rutherford P Hayes, the planet Mars and the native Americans Seeger knew to be the country's true founders, this rich, vastly engrossing volume also scotches the story that he tried to sabotage Dylan's electric guitar at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965 by attempting to cut his wires – Seeger was no Luddite. He was simply dismayed on his father's behalf that Dylan's words could not be heard above the guitar. For Dylan, protest was a mere phase, a jumping off point for further phases. Seeger's own commitment to his art was lifelong, unwavering.

★★★★★
David Stubbs

Leonard Cohen: The Mystical Roots Of Genius

Harry Freedman BLOOMSBURY

Serious singer, serious book.



For all his sense of mischief, his wry politics and his surprisingly frequent

bawdiness, even the most cursory glance would confirm that Leonard Cohen's work overflows with Biblical references. As befits one whose surname denoted him as being descended from the Jewish priest caste, he would, you suspect, be secretly thrilled at author Harry Freedman's attempt to re-cast him as a contemporary paytan, the fifth-century Jewish scholars whose poetry recast Biblical stories in a then-present-day setting.

Freedman, a leading British authority on Jewish culture, unquestionably has a point, and how well he makes it. He takes four Biblical tangents – The Bible As Allegory, Ideas From The Bible, Heaven & Earth, Prayer – and discusses a Cohen song in that context. Obviously that sounds drier than a Saharan summer, but Freedman spins his yarns with such elegance that

there's light and colour everywhere, whether it's discovering that *Born In Chains* took 40 years to write, or that the 'You don't really care for music, do you?' line in *Hallelujah* was King David berating God's refusal to be worshipped through music.

It's no life story, it's no musical appreciation, but it is a pathway to a deeper understanding of this deepest of artists.

★★★★★
John Aizlewood

33 1/3: Sandinista!

Micajah Henley

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC

The Clash's grand folly reappraised.

You had to admire the chutzpah of The Clash in following *London Calling* with six sprawling sides of *Sandinista!* in 1980. As well as a useful chapter on Strummer's politics, drawing comparisons with the gag-free writings of Ernst Fischer, Micajah Henley approaches the album by contrasting the track-listing of the *Sandinista Now!* radio promo with the real thing. We all have our favourites on the 'punk' White Album, but leaving *Something About England* and *Broadway* off misses the point altogether, although arguing about it is half the fun of the book. Yes, Mickey Gallagher's kids singing *Career Opportunities* belongs in the bin, but Strummer reckoned: "the more I think about it, the more happy I am that it is as it is". Irish Journalist Stuart Clark put it even better: "The only thing wrong with *Sandinista!* is that it's too short."

★★★★★
Pat Carty

A Furious Devotion: The Life Of Shane MacGowan

Richard Balls OMNIBUS

Updated biography, including Shane's last refrain.



Shane MacGowan's funeral in Nenagh, Tipperary last December was cleansing, profane

and utterly alive with music. Parts of his songbook had already passed into the tradition, but the depth of his writing and the array of musician fans gave testimony to this major talent.

When the first edition of this book was published in 2021, that process of reappraisal had already begun, so the story ended on an upswing. This revised version details the

death and transfiguration of a damaged artist who had struggled to write significant music for the last 25 years of his life. Naturally, it details high times with The Pogues and The Popes, punk-rock thrills and the displaced ache of a London-Irish identity. The narrative sags in places, but the life this book is about was extraordinary.



Stuart Bailie

Neu Klang: The Definitive History Of Krautrock

Christoph Dallach FABER & FABER

A German's illuminating oral history of a genre.



Considering the relatively modest sales its leading lights achieved (Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream

aside, perhaps) at the time of their creative peak in the early 70s, the wave of experimental German music that has been lassoed together as krautrock has been the subject of plenty of appreciative analysis, particularly since Julian Cope began to rekindle interest in it in the mid-90s. But Christoph Dallach's book is the first time a German writer has spoken in depth in his native language (carefully translated here) to a substantial line-up of the key players, and also spoken to all sorts of krautrock fans around them, from Jean-Michel Jarre to Iggy Pop. Better still, their interviews paint a vivid picture of the post-war German culture – and 1960s counter-culture – in which the scene's ideas germinated. It helps that they're a gobby bunch – whatever the German is for "we just do what we do for ourselves", one suspects such sentiments would be anathema to these unrepentant cultural revolutionaries.



Johnny Sharp

The West's Greatest Rock Shows 1963-1978

Robin Askeew BRISTOL BOOKS

Once upon a time in the West. Bursting with rock legends, from The Beatles to Bowie, Jimi Hendrix to Tina Turner, Led Zeppelin to Pink Floyd, this exhaustively well-researched anthology commemorates hundreds of gigs, festivals and long-forgotten venues in Bristol, Bath and Somerset, all distilled into snappy, bite-sized chapters.

Unlikely juxtapositions between superstar bands and rustic West Country life provides ample scope for droll observation, whether it's the Stones causing a riot at Longleat safari park, The Byrds attending a steam engine rally in Bristol, Bowie turning up three days early for the original 1971 Glastonbury Fayre, or Kraftwerk playing a low-key show to baffled yokels in Yeovil in 1975. Askeew's avowed aversion to punk rock is his only real blind spot, and the book overlooks some celebrated late-70s gigs by the likes of The Clash and The Damned. Otherwise this effortlessly fun collection feels bigger than a music book, more like a rich feast of juicy, gossipy social history.



Stephen Dalton

Bowie Odyssey 74

Simon Goddard OMNIBUS

Latest in stellar Bowie series pulls another one out of the oxygen tent.



David Bowie, now living in America, is drinking and drugging a lot, living in

a penthouse two doors down from Greta Garbo and being pursued, possibly romantically but more likely in a deranged way, by Elizabeth Taylor. He likes to stand naked on his roof at night, watching the flying saucers. It must be 1974.

Simon Goddard's rip-roaring year-by-year series of Bowie books reaches a part of the story where you can't go wrong, like a biopic arriving at the anti-hero's most glorious mix of meltdowns and big, bold strokes of genius. Sometimes, in these poetic-prose books, one wonders if the author is perhaps gilding the lily a little, sensationalising stuff that was doing pretty well at being spectacular of its own accord. Then you read on, as the era is further described fizzingly – its popular culture, the timbre and temperature of the times – and accept that, yeah, this is (probably) all completely true. This is the year not only of the *Diamond Dogs*, but of the *David Live* tour, and the opening swoons of *Young Americans*. It is, unfortunately, a tremendous advert for going off the rails and following your muse while being, temporarily, an often disgraceful human being with a plastic soul.



Chris Roberts

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A HARD DAY'S ROCK FEST

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EDITED BY IAN FORTNAM (REVIEWS) AND DAVE LING (TOURS)

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Judas Priest

The Metal Gods gild
a glorious three-band bill.

P **92** INTERVIEWS

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P **100** LIVE REVIEWS



|||||
"There's no better catharsis than being at a thrash-metal show, screaming along with the band and banging your head."



Anthrax

One of thrash metal's Big Four bring the noise – and Kreator and Testament – in November.

As the band put the finishing touches on a twelfth studio album that's expected later this year, Scott Ian, the guitarist and last remaining co-founder of the New York thrashers, sets the scene for a five-date British and Irish tour in November with fellow metallic progenitors Kreator from Germany and Bay Area bangers Testament.

Having Kreator and Testament on this bill should make for a great tour.

Yeah. We had an amazing UK run last fall, so to come back again with something even bigger is very exciting. We're pumped, man!

What is the essence of a good thrash-metal gig?

It's the excitement it brings. I just love the anticipation of standing in the pit and waiting for a show to start. I still remember being down on the floor at The Ritz [in New York] in 1987, a minute from Slayer coming on stage, and the energy in the air was palpable. What would the first song be? There's no better catharsis than being at a thrash-metal show, screaming along with the band and banging your head.

After the decades the genre has spent in the mainstream, is it now almost comical to remember the way purists turned up their noses at thrash? Some insisted it was "just a noise", and that it would go away.

That question makes me think of our manager

Jonny Z [Zazula, who died in 2022]. Jonny also managed Metallica, and he took *No Life 'Til Leather* [Metallica's demo] to every A&R man in New York City. They'd have fingers in their ears and tell him to turn it off. So Jonny put it out himself [via his label Megaforce]. It didn't take too long before those same people realised whether or not that music was for them, it was for *somebody*. Thrash bands sold record and tickets, and that's when the feeding frenzy started.

Should the Big Four of thrash – Anthrax, Metallica, Megadeth and Slayer – have been the Big Five, or even the Big Six?

To me, Exodus should have been mentioned in that same bracket. They started back in 1979 as

a covers band, two years even before us, Metallica and Slayer [Megadeth formed in 1983]. Whoever coined that phrase should have included Exodus. They were there at the beginning, and I still think that in *Bonded By Blood* they made the best debut record of the five of us.

And then there's Testament.

Sure. But though Testament formed as Legacy [in 1983], they weren't in the first wave. [Laughs] I don't make the rules, man. You'll have to take it up with the guy that came up with the phrase.

Were you as astonished as everyone else when Slayer recently came out of retirement?

I wrote to Kerry [King, guitarist] and said: "Thanks for making me look like a liar." We were on Slayer's goodbye tour for over a hundred shows. During that year and a half together I got the sense that if they said were ending, then that's what was happening. Personally I felt it was too soon – the world needs Slayer – but I took them at their word on that. I really felt that they would be the one band that when they said they were retiring, they'd be done for good.

How did Kerry respond to your email?

He wrote back saying: "Hahaha. Hey, it's just three shows." I replied: "Yeah, we'll see."

Before Anthrax's set at Wembley Arena with Slayer on that tour back in 2018, your son Revel appeared on stage in a Freddie Mercury outfit and mimed to a Queen song. Given his family heritage (his mum is Pearl Aday, and his grandad Meat Loaf) it was probably inevitable that he would form his own band.

Revel was in a full-on Queen thing at that point. I think that show was around Halloween, that's why he wore that outfit.

How old is Revel now?

He's twelve. He has a new band called X-Comm. A three-piece punk thing, very brutal and fast.

How does it make you feel for him to be following your path?

Seeing it through his eyes is just the best. I'm so excited and happy for him.

It's been reported that on this tour Anthrax might preview a song from a forthcoming studio album.

'Might' is the important word. November is a long time off. As a band we haven't played any of those songs. Three of us did in the studio. But with solos and vocals... that's yet to happen. There are still four songs for Joey [Belladonna] left to sing, and John [Donais] is still working on lead-guitar solos. Then we've got to get in a room together and learn how to play them.

What's the time frame for the album's release?

We don't have one yet, though of course it would be great if it could come out before the tour starts, but I can't promise that will be the case.

Can you tell us anything about what's on it?

Safe to say it's a metal record [laughs]. It's the most aggressive one we've made since maybe *Persistence Of Time* [1990]. **DL**

The runs from November 21 to 27.



Toby Jepson

Music and chat from the singer/songwriter/musician.

Scarborough-born Jepson began his career in the mid-80s as the singer with Little Angels, and then had a spell as a solo artist. After leaving the music business, he returned under his own name in 2001, followed by stints as the frontman with Fastway, Gun and Dio's Disciples. This month Jepson takes time out of his latest group, Wayward Sons, to undertake an acoustic and spoken-word tour.

These 'an evening with...' shows are becoming increasingly popular. Did you go to one by another artist and think: "I'd like to do that?"

Not really. Before covid I was building a bit of a reputation as an acoustic artist, and I've done it on and off ever since I got back in the game. Going out there alone for two hours is among the biggest challenges I've faced as a musician, but I love telling stories and answering questions from the audience. For me it's also quite a nostalgic thing.

You became a star at an early age, had a Number-One album, saw your band break up unexpectedly, retired from the business to become an actor, returned to music as a solo artist, and now you front Wayward Sons. You must have plenty of war stories.

You wouldn't believe how many [laughs]. Thirty-five years into my career I feel like a bit of a 'lifer'. Some of what happened is dark, but there's also been a massive amount of light. I'm so grateful that the fans have stuck with me, some since day one. I know that when I go on stage there will be faces I've seen since I was eighteen years old.

What would you like people to take away from the experience?

That's a really good question. I'd like them to

understand what it's like to be a songwriter. That's what it was always about for me, not the trappings of being in a band. These songs are a time machine. I hope that people will get a greater understanding of what makes me tick.

You must have some great tales about 'Fast' Eddie Clarke in Fastway?

Yeah. Working with Ed was an extraordinary experience. He's a great example of what this business can do to you – good and bad. He was completely honest with me. I got the sharp edge of his tongue, but there was also so much kindness and gentleness. Ed didn't suffer fools gladly, and I learned so much from him. Being in Fastway was a baptism by fire.

On their most recent tour, Wayward Sons invited new bands to become support acts. What was the standard of those that replied?

It was extremely good. Regrettably, that experience made me realise how much rock music is 'shuttered off' into meaningless categories. A band called MuddiBrook [from Derby] was our main support. They've got two ladies in the line-up. Was it alt.rock, or indie? I don't know what to call it, only that they were interesting and I liked them. There's lots of talent out there, though the cookie-cutter stuff – copying everybody else – just doesn't interest me at all.

What does the rest of 2024 hold for you?

I'm making a solo record under the Toby & The Whole Truth banner, with some special guests. I still work in the film industry, and we've got a couple of films in development. I can honestly say that I've never been busier. **DL**

Toby Jepson's 18-date tour begins on May 10 and ends on June 25.



|||||
"There was no definitive chat-up line, though I did cast Greta as the lead in a Buckcherry video I was directing."

Beaux Gris Gris & The Apocalypse

If "a modern-day vaudeville circus act creating music" sounds like your thing, catch them live.

Comprising Louisiana-born singer and musician Greta Valenti and guitarist and British Blues Hall Of Fame inductee Robin Davey, California-based Beaux Gris Gris & The Apocalypse are taking their blend of blues, rock, country and soul around Britain on a 19-date tour.

You must be sick of explaining the band's name, but... please spill the beans.

Valenti: [Laughs] Our song *What's My Name* from our first album *Love & Murder* semi-explains that had I been a boy my name would have been Beaux Gregory, and that my dad always liked his boy children much better than me [laughs]. Also, I wanted a band that was all about Louisiana, where I'm from, and the beautiful gumbo of cultures that make up that incredibly unique place.

In these ADD-affected days, people scroll past something they don't recognise. Has the name's obscurity had any negative impact?

Davey: At first we did wonder if we had made a mistake, that it was so long, or too weird, but the opposite has happened. It stuck in people's mind as unusual, even if they can't pronounce it...

Valenti: ...It's 'Gree Gree', not 'Griss Griss'. It's French, people!

The band's intriguingly titled third album, *Hot Nostalgia Radio*, was written over a four-year

spell, and you had more than a hundred songs to choose from. What were you looking for in the final fourteen?

Valenti: After such a long wait, every song had to be a banger. We're an independent band, we run our own label and we really need to get our name out there and in front of more people. I wanted an album of songs that you could hear on the radio.

Satisfy Your Queen, the first single from the album, is powered by a dirty, Led Zeppelin-like riff that sticks in the brain.

Davey: My influences are the same as those of Jimmy Page. The intro riff is based around something Lightning Hopkins or Guitar Slim would play, but revved up a little. Which is basically what Zeppelin did.

The video for that track has Greta in mock vampire teeth and wielding a broad sword. It looks like it was a lot of fun to make.

Valenti: The song itself is a bit aggressive. I'm a woman demanding people to satisfy their queens, whether in a sexual or relationship way. I wanted a fun video to reveal my true nature as a New Orleans vampire.

As well as being musical partners, you guys are a couple. When and how did you meet?

Davey: Through YouTube, of all places. We were in

separate bands, and both had videos in an early YouTube music video competition.

What was Robin's chat-up line?

Davey: We knew each other a while before we got together, so there was no definitive chat-up line, though I did cast Greta as the lead in a Buckcherry video I was directing.

Valenti: That was very casting-couch behaviour. He also sent me some scandalous photographs. I guess it worked. Together sixteen years this fall.

The press info talks of "epic, one-of-a-kind live shows". What makes them unique?

Davey: Sometimes our show approaches three hours, and although we have a list of songs, we never have a set order. It all depends on the room, the audience and how we are feeling.

Valenti: We make it unique. I've been a stage performer since the age of four – theatre, off-Broadway, Groundlings improv, and of course music and my New Orleans theatrical and mystical upbringing. Robin's been a touring British blues musician since he was fourteen. We are a modern-day vaudeville circus act creating music. We try to not only entertain but also to connect and to find our people in this big yet also very small spinning rock in outer space. **DL**

The last date of the tour is May 7.

Tour Dates

AC/DC, THE PRETTY RECKLESS

London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 3, 7
Dublin	Croke Park	Aug 17

BRYAN ADAMS

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 13-15
Coventry	Building Society Arena	May 17
Sheffield	Utilita Arena	May 18
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	May 19
Dublin	3 Arena	May 21
Belfast	SSE Arena	May 22

THE ANSWER

London	Camden Dingwalls	Jun 20
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ANTHRAX, KREATOR, TESTAMENT

Manchester	Apollo	Nov 21
Wolverhampton	Civic	Nov 22
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 23
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 25
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 27

APOCALYPTICA

Manchester	Albert Hall	Sep 29
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 30
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Oct 1
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 3
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 4
Cardiff	Great Hall	Oct 5

ARMORED SAINT

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 13
Manchester	Rebellion	Aug 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Aug 16
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Aug 17
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Aug 18

BLAZE BAYLEY

Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Sep 18
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 19
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 20
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 21
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 22

BEAUX GRIS GRIS & THE APOCALYPSE

Hampshire	Forest Arts Centre	Apr 26
Stockton-On-Tees	Blues At The Bay	Apr 27
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Apr 29, May 6, 7
Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	May 1
Hastings	The Carlisle	May 2
Devizes	Corn Exchange	May 4
Cardiff	Acapela Studios	May 5

BIG BIG TRAIN

Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Sep 17
Newport	Riverfront	Sep 18
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Sep 19
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Sep 21
Newark	Palace Theatre	Sep 22
Wavendon	The Stables	Sep 24
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Sep 25

BLACKBERRY SMOKE, THE STEEL WOODS

Glasgow	Academy	Sep 9
Edinburgh	Academy	Sep 10
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 12
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 13
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 14

THE BLACK CROWES, THE JIM JONES ALL STARS

Manchester	Apollo	May 14
London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 15
Newcastle	City Hall	May 17
Wolverhampton	Civic	May 18

BLUES PILLS

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 8
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 9
London	King's Cross Lafayette	Oct 11
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Oct 12
Dublin	Opium	Oct 13
Bristol	Thekla	Oct 15

BODYCOUNT

London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 1
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 2

BRAVE RIVAL

Leighton Buzzard	Library Theatre	Apr 26
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Apr 27, 28
London	Putney Half Moon	May 4
Tring	David Evans Court Theatre	May 6
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	May 10
Tring	David Evans Court Theatre	May 16
Cranleigh	Arts Centre	May 17

Birmingham	Jo Jo Jims	May 18
Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	Jun 14
Fareham	Ashcroft Arts Theatre	Jun 15
Worthing	Factory	Jun 16
Cranbrook	Queens Hall	Jun 22
Chippenham	The Pewson	Jun 29
Petersfield	Festival Hall	Aug 31

OLI BROWN & THE DEAD COLLECTIVE

Crumlin	The Patriot	Apr 26
Bristol	The Louisiana	Apr 28

BUZZCOCKS

Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	May 17
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	May 24
Castleton	Paek Cavern	May 25

THE CADILLAC THREE

Dublin	Academy	May 4
Belfast	Limelight	May 5
Glasgow	Academy	May 8
Newcastle	NX	May 9
Manchester	Academy	May 11
Leeds	Academy	May 12
Nottingham	Rock City	May 14
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 16
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 17

CALIGULA'S HORSE

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 29
Bristol	Thekla	May 30
Manchester	Gorilla	May 31
London	Islington Academy	Jun 1

PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS

Buckley	Tivoli	May 9
Narberth	Queens Hall	May 10
Newport	Corn Exchange	May 11

CARDINAL BLACK

Chester	Live Rooms	Apr 26
Glasgow	Oran More	Apr 28
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	Jun 16
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 8
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 9
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 11
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 16
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 17
Birmingham	Asylum	Oct 18
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 19
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 24
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Oct 25
Dublin	Whelans	Nov 5
Belfast	Empire	Nov 6
Bath	Komedia	Nov 8
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Nov 9
Reading	Sub 89	Nov 15
Brighton	The Arch	Nov 16
Cardiff	Tramshed	Jan 18

Recommended

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS, BLACK COUNTRY, NEW ROAD

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 2
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 3
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 5
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 6
London	O2 Arena	Nov 8
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 12
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 15

CIRITH UNGOL, NIGHT DEMON

London	Islington Academy	Sep 16
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ERIC CLAPTON

Newcastle	Utilita Arena	May 9
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	May 11
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 13
Dublin	3 Arena	May 16
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 20, 21

ALICE COOPER, THE MEFFS

Glasgow	Ovo Arena	Oct 14
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 16
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 17
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 18
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 20, 21

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Newcastle	The Cluny	May 3
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	May 4
Bedford	Esquires	Jun 21
London	Camden Dingwalls	Jun 22

DEEP PURPLE



With a bunch of classic songs and some new belters, delivered with instrumental firepower and Gillan's howl, you gotta dig it.

See below for dates. Currently November 4 to November 10.

CURVED AIR

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Aug 15
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DEAP VALLY

Brighton	Concorde 2	Jun 3
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 4
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Jun 5
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Jun 6
London	Dalston Earth	Jun 8
Bristol	Thekla	Jun 9

DEEP PURPLE, REEF

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 4
London	O2 Arena	Nov 6
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 7
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 9
Glasgow	OVO Hydro	Nov 10

DEMON

Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 18
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 19

PAUL DI'ANNO, GYPSY'S KISS

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Aug 21
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Aug 22
Newark	Stonedead Festival Party	Aug 23
Crumlin	The Patriot	Aug 25
Swindon	The Vic	Aug 26

BRUCE DICKINSON, BLACK SMOKE TRIGGER

Wolverhampton	The Halls	May 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 18
Manchester	Academy	May 19
Swansea	Arena	May 21
Nottingham	Rock City	May 23
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 24

DOGSTAR

Manchester	New Century Hall	Jun 18
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jun 19

EAGLES, STEELY DAN

Manchester	Co-op Live	May 31, Jun 1, 4, 7, 8
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EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 11
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THE FIERCE AND THE DEAD

Nottingham	JT Soar	Apr 26
Manchester	Gullivers	Apr 27
Bristol	The Gryphon	May 3
Ramsgate	Music Hall	May 4

SAMANTHA FISH

Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 4
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 5
London	Camden Koko	Oct 6
Norwich	Epic Studios	Oct 7
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 8
Bath	Komedia	Oct 9
Leeds	Project House	Oct 10
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 11
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 12
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 13

FM

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 3
Gateshead	The Sage	May 4
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 5

Bury St Edmunds	Apex	May 10
Birmingham	Asylum	May 11
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 17
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	May 18
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 19
Southampton	1865	May 24
London	Camden Dingwalls	May 25
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 30
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 31
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Jun 1

FOCUS

Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Apr 26
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Apr 27
Lewes	Con Club	Apr 28
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 30
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	May 1
Sunderland	Fire Station	May 2
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 3
Chester	Live Rooms	May 4
Wavendon	The Stables	May 5

FOO FIGHTERS

Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 13, 15
Glasgow	Hampton Park	Jun 17
London	Stadium	Jun 20, 21
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 25
Birmingham	Villa Park	Jun 27

LIAM GALLAGHER

Sheffield	Utilita Arena	Jun 2
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Jun 3
London	O2 Arena	Jun 6, 7, 10, 11
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 15, 16, 27, 28
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 19, 20
Dublin	3 Arena	Jun 23, 24

GARBAGE

Glasgow	TRNSMT Festival	Jul 12
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Jul 14
Bridlington	Spa	Jul 15
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jul 17
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 19
London	Wembley Arena	Jul 20

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM

Glasgow	Academy	Jun 18
Sheffield	Academy	Jun 21
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 22
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Jun 23
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jun 25, 26
Dublin	3 Olympia	Jun 29
Nottingham	Rock City	Jul 10
Cheltenham	2000 Trees Festival	Jul 11

GONG

Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Aug 16
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GRETA VAN FLEET

London	Royal Albert Hall	Jul 14
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GREEN DAY

Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 21
Isle Of Wight	Festival	Jun 23
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 25
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 27
London	Wembley Stadium	Jun 29

GREEN LUNG

Colchester	Arts Centre	Apr 30
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LIVE!

Liverpool	Arts Club	May 15
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 16
Limerick	Dolan's Warehouse	May 17
Dublin	Grand Social	May 18
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 19

GUN

Glasgow	St Luke's	Apr 26
Dunfermline	PJ Malloys	Apr 27

STEVE HACKETT

Aylesbury	Friars Waterside	Oct 2
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 3
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 5
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 6
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 7
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 9
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Oct 11
Guildford	G Live	Oct 12
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Oct 13
York	Barbican	Oct 15
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 16
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 18
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 19
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 20
Reading	Hexagon	Oct 22
London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 23

PJ HARVEY, BIG THIEF, TIRZAH, SHIDA SHAHABI

London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 18
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HAWKWIND

Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 14
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	Jun 15
Bath	Forum	Aug 16
Faversham	A New Fay Festival	Aug 17

HEART, SQUEEZE

London	O2 Arena	Jul 1
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jul 3
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Jul 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Jul 6
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Jul 8
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jul 9

HEKZ

Bedford	Esquires	Jun 28
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Sep 20
Southampton	1865	Oct 22

WARNER E HODGES, CONNY BLOOM

Newcastle	The Cluny	May 13
Huddersfield	Parish	May 15
Sheffield	Greystones	May 16
Glasgow	Classic Grand	May 17
Nottingham	Billy Bootleggers	May 19
Leicester	The Musician	May 20
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	May 21
Blackpool	Fulford Arms	May 22
London	Waterloo Music Bar	May 23
London	Camden Club	May 24

JACK J HUTCHINSON

Manchester	Night & Day Café	Oct 1
London	Camden Black Heart	Oct 2
Bristol	Louisiana	Oct 3
Crumlin	Patriot	Oct 4
Torquay	Blues Festival	Oct 5
Belfast	Voodoo	Oct 12
Saltash	Rockin' By The River	Oct 26
Brecon	The Muse	Nov 7
Whitby	Rocks Festival	Nov 28

IN FLAMES, ARCH ENEMY, SOILWORK

Glasgow	Academy	Oct 3
Manchester	Academy	Oct 4
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 5
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 6

JADIS

Southampton	1865	Jun 22
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JANE'S ADDICTION

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 27, 28
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 31
Manchester	Apollo	May 3

TOBY JEPSON, WORDS & ACOUSTIC

Crumlin	The Patriot	May 10
Norwich	Brickmakers	May 12
York	The Crescent	May 14
Bridlington	Black Lion	May 15
Blackpool	Waterloo Musi Bar	May 16
Liverpool	Academy 2	May 18
Ballymena	Diamond Rock Club	Jun 1
Nottingham	Rock City Beta	Jun 6
Bristol	Thekla	Jun 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Jun 8
London	Islington Academy	Jun 9
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Jun 16
Glasgow	Garage Attic	Jun 18
Edinburgh	Mash House	Jun 19
Huddersfield	Parish	Jun 21
Hull	The Welly	Jun 22
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jun 24, 25

JETHRO TULL

Aberdeen	Music Hall	Apr 29
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 30
Gateshead	The Sage	May 2
Sheffield	City Hall	May 3
Salford	The Lowry	May 5
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 6

BILLY JOEL

Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Aug 9
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ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Sittingbourne	Appleyard	Nov 20
Brighton	Komedia	Nov 21
Bath	Komedia	Nov 22
Southampton	1865	Nov 23
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 25
Glasgow	St Luke's	Nov 26
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 27
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 28
Oxford	Academy 2	Nov 30
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 1

LAURENCE JONES

Carlisle	Old Fire Station	May 29
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JOURNEY, CHEAP TRICK

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Oct 30
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 31
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 2
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 4
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 8
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 9
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Nov 11
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 13
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Nov 16
London	O2 Arena	Nov 17

KARNIVOOL

Donington Park	Download Festival	Jun 15
Milton Keynes	Crauford Arms	Jun 16
Brighton	Chalk	Jun 17

KILL THE LIGHTS

Manchester	Star And Garter	Apr 26
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Apr 27
Brighton	Dust	Apr 28

MARCUS KING

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 5
Manchester	Albert Hall	Nov 6
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 7
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 9
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 10
Dublin	Olympia	Nov 12

KIRA MAC, JAYLER

Manchester	A3	Apr 26
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 27
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew Co	Apr 28
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 2
Southampton	1865	May 3
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 4
Norwich	Waterfront	May 5
Bristol	Lost Horizon	May 8
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	May 9
London	Camden Underworld	May 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Underground	May 11

JIM KIRKPATRICK BAND

Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 10
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Oct 11
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Oct 12
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 13

KORN, DENZEL CURRY, SPIRITBOX

London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 11
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THE KORGIS

Edinburgh	Mash House	Apr 26
Glasgow	Hug & Pint	Apr 27
Ilstock	The Palace	Jun 1
Cardiff	Acapela Studio	Jun 6
Selby	Town Hall	Oct 3
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 5

RICHIE KOTZEN

London	Islington Academy	Jun 13
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L7

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jun 16
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LOVE FEATURING JOHNNY ECHOLS

Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Jul 10
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Jul 11
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Jul 12
Liverpool	Academy 2	Jul 13
Guildford	Boilerroom	Jul 15
Southampton	1865	Jul 17
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jul 18
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 20
Newcastle	Gosforth Civic	Jul 24
Edinburgh	The Caves	Jul 25
Glasgow	St Luke's	Jul 26
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jul 29

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS



Pink Floyd drummer's band are keeping Floyd's early, psychedelic days alive with quite brilliant live shows. Set the controls...

See below for dates. Currently June 11 to June 29.

Bristol	The Fleece	Aug 1
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Aug 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 3

MANIC STREET PREACHERS, SUEDE

Llangollen	International Musical Eisteddfod	Jun 28
Dublin	Trinity College	Jul 2
Cardiff	Castle	Jul 5
Edinburgh	Castle	Jul 10
Manchester	Castlefield Bowl	Jul 12
Leeds	Millennium Square	Jul 13
London	Alexandra Palace Park	Jul 18

RICHARD MARX

Bath	Forum	May 17
Liverpool	Philharmonic	May 18
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 19
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 22

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Hanley	Victoria Hall	Jun 11
York	Barbican	Jun 11
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 13
Oxford	New Theatre	Jun 15
Bristol	Beacon	Jun 17
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 18
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 19
Glasgow	SEC	Jun 21
Gateshead	The Glasshouse	Jun 22
Cardiff	Millenium Centre	Jun 24
Poole	Lighthouse	Jun 25
Brighton	Dome	Jun 26
Ipswich	Regent	Jun 28
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 29

DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 27
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 29

ANDY MCCOY BAND, CONTINENTAL LOVERS

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Sep 11
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 12
Bradford	Nightrain	Sep 13
Newcastle	Think Tank	Sep 14
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Sep 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 16
Brighton	The Arch	Sep 18
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 19
Swansea	The Bunkhouse	Sep 20

CHANTEL MCGREGOR

Hertford	Com Exchange	May 23
Rotherham	Chantry Brewery	Jun 8
Cardiff	Acapela Studios	Jun 13
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	Jun 16
Bradford	Tapestry	Jun 21
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jul 5
Linton	Blues Festival Jun	Jul 6
Worthing	The Factory Live	Jul 18
Ripley	Town Hall	Jul 20

MARCO MENDOZA TRIO

Belfast	Limelight 2	May 30
Mayo	Jesters	May 31
Dublin	Thomas House	Jun 1
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Jun 2
Newcastle	Trillians	Jun 3
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 4

Sheffield	Corporation	Jun 5
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jun 6
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Jun 7
Bradford	Nightrain	Jun 8
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jun 9

PAT METHENY

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 14
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MIDNITE CITY, CONTINENTAL LOVERS

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 26
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 27
Birmingham	Billesley Rock Club	May 3
Nottingham	Old Cold Store	May 4
Bradford	Nightrain	May 10
London	Tufnell Park Dome	May 11

MR. BIG

Maidstone	Maid Of Stone Festival	Jul 21
Leeds	Academy	Jul 22
Liverpool	Academy	Jul 27
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 28

MR BUNGLE

London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 12
Manchester	The Ritz	Jun 13
Donington Park	Download Festival	Jun 14

MOON SAFARI

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 6
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NEW MODEL ARMY

Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Apr 26
Leeds	Academy	Apr 27
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 11

NICKELBACK

Glasgow	Hydro	May 16
Manchester	AO Arena	May 20
London	O2 Arena	May 21
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	May 23

Recommended

STEVIE NICKS

Glasgow	Hydro	Jul 6
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jul 9
London	Hyde Park BST	Jul 12

JOHN OTWAY & WILD WILLY BARRETT

Cambridge	Storey's Field Centre	May 4
Hull	Social	Jul 28

CASSIDY PARIS

Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Jul 12
Sheffield	Corporation	Jul 13
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 18
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Jul 19
Preston	The Ferret	Jul 20
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Jul 23
Huddersfield	Parish	Jul 24
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jul 25
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 28
Leicester	The Musician	Aug 1
London	Stratford Cart And Horses	Aug 2

Southampton	Suburbia	Aug 3
Hastings	The Carlisle	Aug 6
Wimbledon	The Cavern	Aug 7
Camberley	Login Lounge	Aug 8

PEARL JAM

Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 25
London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 29

JIZZY PEARL'S LOVE/HATE, NEW GENERATION SUPERSTARS

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 5
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 6
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Mar 8
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 12
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 13
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell Fest	Mar 14
Crumlin	The Patriot	Mar 15

PRAYING MANTIS

Hastings	The Carlisle	Apr 25
London	Stratford Chart & Horses	Apr 26

THE PRETENDERS (RESCHEDULED DATES)

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 11
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 12
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 13
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 16
Gateshead	The Glasshouse	Oct 17
Hull	Connexin Live	Oct 19
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 20
London	Palladium	Oct 22-24
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Oct 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 27
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 28

SUZI QUATRO

London	Palladium	Nov 13
York	Barbican	Nov 13
Cardiff	New Theatre	Nov 17
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Nov 18
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 20

NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SWEATS

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jun 22
Manchester	Albert Hall	Jun 25
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 26
York	Barbican	Jun 27
Bristol	SWX	Jun 29
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jun 30

TROY REDFERN

Frome	The Treehouse	Jun 17
Manchester	Retro	Jun 18
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Jun 19
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 20
Chester	Live Rooms	Jun 21
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Jun 22
Guildford	Boilerroom	Jun 23
Cambridge	Junction	Jun 24
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Jun 25
London	New Cross Inn	Jun 26
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Jun 27

RHINO'S REVENGE

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Oct 22-24
London	Putney Half Moon	Oct 27

Recommended

RIVAL SONS

Oxford	Academy	Jun 9
Northampton	Roadmenders	Jun 10

RIVERSIDE, KLONE

Norwich	Epic Studios	May 12
Birmingham	Institute	May 13
Belfast	Limelight	May 15
Dublin	Academy	May 16
Glasgow	Old Fruit Market	May 18
London	Camden Koko	May 19
Bristol	SWX	May 20
Manchester	The Ritz	May 21

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER (UNPLUGGED)

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	May 22
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ROYAL BLOOD

London	Brixton Academy	Jun 18, 19
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DARIUS RUCKER

Manchester	Apollo	Apr 27
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 28
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 30
Bristol	Beacon	May 1
London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 3
Leeds	Academy	May 5

Glasgow	Academy	May 6
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	May 9
Belfast	Waterfront Hall	May 11

SAD CAFÉ

Barnoldswick	Arts Centre	Jun 15
Cardiff	Acapela Studios	Jun 16
Buxton	Opera House	Jul 14

SCORPIONS, EXTREME

London	Wembley Arena	Jun 8
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CONNOR SELBY

Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Jun 13
Aldershot	West End Centre	Jun 14
Fareham	Ashtcroft Arts Centre	Jun 22

SEPULTURA, JINJER, OBITUARY, JESUS PIECE

Manchester	Academy	Nov 8
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Nov 9
Belfast	Telegraph Building	Nov 10
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Nov 11
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 12

SLIPKNOT, BLEED FROM WITHIN

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 14
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 15
Manchester	Co-op Live Arena	Dec 17
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Dec 18
London	O2 Arena	Dec 20, 21

SMASHING PUMPKINS, WEEZER

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jun 7
London	O2 Arena	Jun 8
Dublin	3 Arena	Jun 10
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 12
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 13
Cardiff	Castle	Jun 14

THE SOUTHERN RIVER BAND

London	Camden Underworld	May 15
Brighton	Great Escape Festival	May 17
Cornwall	Tunes In The Dunes Festival	May 19
Liverpool	District	May 21
Dublin	Workmans Club	May 22

SPIKE'S QUIREBOYS, WILLIE DOWLING

Sheffield	Corporation	May 9
Newcastle	Riverside	May 10
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	May 11
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 12

SPREAD EAGLE, NEW GENERATION SUPERSTARS

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 24
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 25
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 26
Derby	Queen Vic	Sep 28
Birmingham	Subside	Sep 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Oct 2
Bristol	Gryphon	Oct 3
London	Camden Assembly	Oct 4
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 5

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND

Cardiff	Principality Stadium	May 5
Belfast	Boucher Park	May 9
Kilkenny	Nowlan Park	May 12
Cork	Páirc Uí Chaoimh	May 16
Dublin	Croke Park	May 19
Sunderland	Stadium Of Light	May 22
London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 25, 27

STATUS QUO

Belfast	Botanic Gardens	May 28
Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	Jun 2
Swansea	Arena	Jun 4
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jun 5
Halifax	Piece Hall	Aug 13
Margate	Dreamland	Aug 15
Taunton	Vivary Park	Aug 23

GEOFF TATE, KIM JENNETT

Limerick	Dolans	Sep 27
Londonderry	Nerve Centre	Sep 28
Galway	Róisín Dubh	Sep 29
London	Islington Academy	Oct 3
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 4
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 5
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 6
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 9
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 10
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 11
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Oct 12
Dundee	Beat Generator	Oct 15
Glasgow	Cathouse	Oct 18

TEN

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 8
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jun 30
Manchester	Academy	Jul 13
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Jul 20
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Jul 27

PEARL JAM



A band with a jewel-box of songs, whose live shows never fail to uplift and inspire audiences with a mix of power and grace.

See left for dates. Currently June 22, 25 and 29.

Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Aug 17
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Sep 7

TENACIOUS D

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 7
Manchester	AO Arena	May 8
Glasgow	The Hydro	May 9
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 11
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	May 12
Bristol	Centre	May 13

THERAPY?

Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Nov 8
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 9
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 10
Southampton	1865	Nov 12
Manchester	Academy	Nov 14
Bristol	Academy	Nov 15
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 16

THESE WICKED RIVERS, SHE BURNS RED

Bridgwater	Cobblestones	May 17
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugar Mill	May 18
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 19
Cardiff	Club Ifor Bach	May 24
Bournemouth	Bear Cave	May 25
Lincolnshire	Call Of The Wild Festival	May 26
Leicester	Academy	May 31
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 1
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jun 2

RICHARD THOMPSON

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 25
Bristol	Beacon	May 26
York	Barbican	May 27
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 29
Gateshead	Glasshouse	May 30
Manchester	Aviva Studios	May 31
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Jun 1
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 3
Cardiff	New Theatre	Jun 4
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Jun 5
Brighton	Dome	Jun 6
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 8

TIGERTAILZ

Buckley	Tivoli	Jul 19
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 20
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jul 21
Cardiff	Tramshed	Aug 10

TOOL

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 30
Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 1
London	O2 Arena	Jun 3

WALTER TROUT, LAURA EVANS

Buxton	Opera House	Oct 16
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 17
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 18
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 19
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 22
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 23
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 24
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 25

ROBIN TROWER

Southampton	The Brook	May 27
London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 28

Gateshead	Glasshouse	May 30
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 31

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Lowdham	Village Hall	May 17
Sheffield	Greystones	May 18
Bilston	Robin 2	May 19
Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	Sep 4
Southampton	1865	Sep 5
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Sep 6
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Sep 7
Deal	Astor Theatre	Sep 12
Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Sep 13
Knarborough	Frazer Theatre	Sep 14
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Sep 19
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Sep 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 21
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Sep 26
London	Camden The Forge	Oct 3
Chelmsford	Social Club	Oct 4

TYGERS OF PAN TANG

Preston	The Continental	May 2
London	Boston Music Room	May 3
Merthyr Tydfil	The Crown	May 4
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven Club	May 5

JUDIE TZUKE

Bury	The Met	Oct 11
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 12
Sunderland	17 Nineteen	Oct 13
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Oct 15
Sheffield	Greystones	Oct 17
Barton	The Ropewalk	Oct 18
Selby	Town Hall	Oct 19
Bath	Chapel Arts	Oct 24
Cardiff	Acapela Studios	Oct 25
Twickenham	The Exchange	Oct 26
Havant	The Spring	Nov 1
Southampton	Hangar Farm	Nov 2
Cobham	St Mary Magdalen	Nov 7
Wokingham	Whitty Theatre	Nov 8
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Nov 9
Melbourne	Assembly Rooms	Nov 15
Tamworth	Boleshill Manor	Nov 16
Elpswich	Corn Exchange	Dec 13
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Dec 14
Poole	Lighthouse	Dec 15
Guildford	G Live	Dec 16
Bath	Forum	Dec 18
London	Cadogan Hall	Dec 20

WARRIOR SOUL

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 10
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jul 11
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Jul 12
Nottingham	Bootleggers	Jul 13
Coalville	The Victoria	Jul 14
Newcastle	Trillians	Jul 17
Glasgow	Venue TBC	Jul 18

WEDNESDAY 13 CELEBRATES THE MURDERDOLLS

Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 24
Glasgow	Slay	Oct 25
Belfast	Limelight 2	Oct 26
Dublin	Opium	Oct 27
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 29
Manchester	Club Academy	Oct 31



LIVE!

Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 1
Bristol	Thekla	Nov 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 3
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 5
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 7
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 8
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 9
Northampton	Roadmender	Nov 10

DARREN WHARTON'S RENEGADE

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 6
London	Islington Academy	Jun 7
Birmingham	Institute	Jun 8
Bury	The Met	Jun 9

Recommended

WHEN RIVERS MEET

Southampton	The Brook	Apr 27
Bristol	Thekla	Apr 28
Manchester	Gorilla	May 2
Glasgow	St Luke's	May 3
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 4
Norwich	Epic Studios	May 9
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 10
London	Highbury Garage	May 11

HANNAH WICKLUND

Chester	Live Rooms	May 24
Sheffield	Corporation	May 25
Cardiff	Globe	May 26
Dublin	Grand Social	May 28
Belfast	Ulster Sports Club	May 29
Glasgow	G2	May 31
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew Co	Jun 1
Leeds	Headrow House	Jun 2
Bristol	Strange Brew	Jun 4

CJ WILDHEART

Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 26
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 28

THE WILDHEARTS, LADYHAWKE, ASONVEL

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jun 6
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WINGER, JOE HOEKSTRA & BRANDON GIBBS

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jun 7
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WISHBONE ASH

Derby	Flowerpot	Sep 20
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 21
Lytham	Lowther Pavilion	Sep 23
Southport	Atkinson Theatre	Sep 24
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Sep 26
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Sep 27
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Sep 28
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Sep 29
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Oct 1
Stockton-on-Tees	ARC	Oct 2
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 3
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 4
Bury	The Met	Oct 5
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 7
Hunstanton	Princess Theatre	Oct 8
Lincoln	The Drill	Oct 9
Walsall	Arena And Arts Centre	Oct 10
Rugby	Benn Hall	Oct 11
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Oct 12
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 14
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 15
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 16
Wimbome	Tivoli	Oct 17
Devizes	Corn Exchange	Oct 18
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 19
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 21
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 22
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 23
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 24

Y&T

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 22
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 23
London	Islington Academy	Oct 25
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 26
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 27
Glasgow	St Luke's	Oct 30
Newcastle	Northumbria Students Union	Nov 1
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 2

YES

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 23
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 24
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 26
York	Barbican	May 28
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	May 29
Bristol	Beacon	May 31
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 1
Gateshead	The Sage	Jun 2
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 4

THE ZOMBIES

Poole	Lighthouse	May 21
Exeter	Corn Exchange	May 22
Buxton	Opera House	May 24
Manchester	RNCM	May 26
Leeds	City Varieties	May 27
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 28
Whitley	Bay Playhouse	May 30
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Jun 1
Bristol	St George's Hall	Jun 4
London	Barbican Centre	Jun 7
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Jun 14

ZZ TOP, RIVAL SONS, THOSE DAMN CROWS

London	Wembley Arena	Jul 11
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Festivals

2000 TREES

Cheltenham	Upcote Farm	Jul 10-13
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ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL MOGWAI, ILSAHN, MESHUGGAH, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 14-17
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BEARDED THEORY JANE'S ADDICTION, DINOSAUR JR, NEW MODEL ARMY, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Hall	May 23-26
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BEAUTIFUL DAYS RICHARD ASHCROFT, TOYAH & ROBERT FRIPP, LEVELLERS, MORE

Devon	Escot Park	Aug 16-18
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BLACK DEER SHERYL CROW, SEASICK STEVE, THE SHIRES, MORE

Kent	Eridge Park	Jun 14-16
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BLOODSTOCK OPEH, AMON AMARTH, CLUTCH, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 8-11
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BRADSTOCK SOUTH OF SALEM, CJ WILDHEART, EMPYRE, MORE

Bradford	Nightrain	May 4
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CALL OF THE WILD TYKETTO, BAD TOUCH, SOUTH OF SALEM, MORE

Lincolnshire	Showground	May 24-26
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CAMBRIDGE FOLK FESTIVAL ROBERT PLANT & SAVING GRACE, TRANSLANTIC SESSIONS, FANTASTIC NEGRITO, MORE

Cambridge	Cherry Hinton Hall	Jul 25-28
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CARLISLE BLUES ROCK FESTIVAL THE CINELLI BROTHERS, BRAVE RIVAL, REBECCA DOWNES, MORE

Carlisle	Crown & Mitre Hotel	Oct 11-13
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CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL ROBERT PLANT & SAVING GRACE, ROGER DALTREY, COURTNEY PINE, MORE

Cheltenham	Montpellier Gardens	May 1-6
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CORNWALL ROCKS DARE, BRAVE RIVAL, COLLATERAL, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Oct 4-6
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CROPREDY RICK WAKEMAN, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOCUS, MORE

Oxfordshire	Cropredy	Aug 8-10
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DESERTFEST MASTERS OF REALITY, GODFLESH, BRANT BJORK TRIO, MORE

London	Camden various venues	May 17-19
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DOWNLOAD QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, AVENGED SEVENFOLD, PANTERA, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 14-16
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FIREFEST TOUCH, OVERLAND, CONEY HATCH, MORE

Manchester	Academy	Oct 11-13
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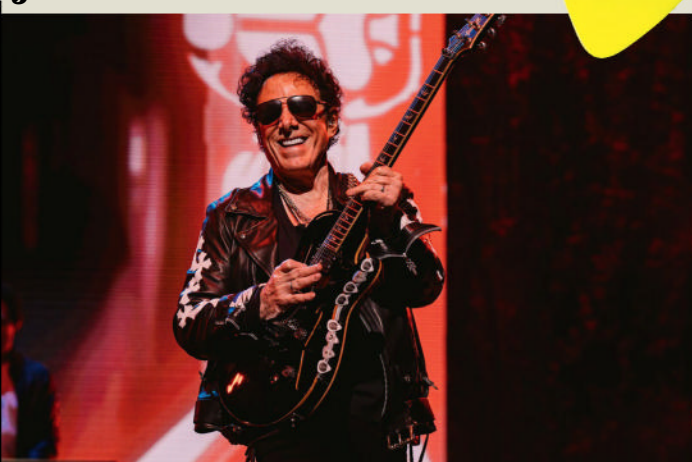
FIREVOLT VANDENBERG, GUN, STONE BROKEN, MORE

Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 9-11
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GLASGOW BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL CARDINAL BLACK, ELLES BAILEY, CONNOR SELBY, MORE

Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 28
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JOURNEY



Remaining founder Neal Schon and co. are still going strong in their 50th year. *Don't Stop Believin'*? Yeah, they might play it.

See page 98 for dates. Currently October 30 to November 17.

HARD ROCK HELL NASHVILLE PUSSY, LIZZY BORDEN, WEDNESDAY 13, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 7-10
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HARD ROCK HELL PROG PENDRAGON, ARTHUR BROWN, COLOSSEUM, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 14-17
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HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE HOUSE OF LORDS, SANTA CRUZ, SPACE AGE PLAYBOYS, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 6-8
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HIGHWAYS THE CADILLAC THREE, BRETT YOUNG, SHANE SMITH & THE SAINTS, MORE

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 17, 18
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ISLE OF WIGHT THE DARKNESS, GREEN DAY, THE PRODIGY, MORE

Newport	Seaclose Park	Jun 20-23
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LATITUDE DURAN DURAN, KASABIAN, KEANE, MORE

Suffolk	Henham Park	Jul 25-28
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LINCOLN BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK THE ANIMALS, CHANTEL MCGREGOR, BRAVE RIVAL, MORE

Lincoln	Drill Hall	May 12
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THE LONG ROAD BLACKBERRY SMOKE, THE SHEEPDOGS, MORE

Leicestershire	Stanford Hall	Aug 23-25
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LOOE BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL DOM MARTIN, ALICE ARMSTRONG, CONNOR SELBY, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Resort	Dec 6-8
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LOVE ROCKS THE ANSWER, THE TREATMENT, SCARLET REBELS, MORE

Dorset	St Leonards Farm	Jun 20-22
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MAID OF STONE MR. BIG, WOLF MOTHER, LIVING COLOUR, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 19-21
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NENE VALLEY ROCK FESTIVAL NEKTAR, CARAVAN, DARREN WHARTON'S RENEGADE, MORE

Lincolnshire	Grimethorpe Castle	Sep 5-8
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A NEW DAY FESTIVAL HAWKWIND, TANGERINE DREAM, GONG, FOCUS, MORE

Faversham	Mount Ephraim Gardens	Aug 16-18
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NORTHERN KIN HAWKWIND, CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN, WATERBOYS, MORE

Durham	Thornley Hall Farm	Jun 14-16
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RADAR TESSERA CT, LEPROUS, THE MIDNIGHT, MORE

Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jul 26-26
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READING AND LEEDS FESTIVALS BLINK 182, LIAM GALLAGHER, THE PRODIGY, MORE

Reading	Little John's Farm	Aug 23-25
Leeds	Braham Park	Aug 23-25

REBELLION THE STRANGLERS, STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, SHAM 69, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Aug 1-4
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S.O.S. THE HOT DAMN!, FURY, DAN BYRNE, MORE

Oldham	Whittles	Jul 5-7
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SOUNDLE WEEKEND SOLSTICE, THE EMERALD DAWN, JOHN HACKETT, MORE

Peterborough	Key Theatre	Jun 1, 2
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STEELHOUSE SAXON, THE ALMIGHTY, MR. BIG, SKINDRED, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 26-28
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STONEDEAD KK'S PRIEST, DORO, ECLIPSE, MORE

Newark	Showground	Aug 24
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TOMORROW'S GHOST FESTIVAL KATATONIA, CREEPER, PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 1, 2
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TOWER OF FIRE NITRATE, ATTACK, REMEDY, SARACEN, MORE

Manchester	Rebellion	Jun 29
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UK BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL ARTHUR BROWN, KING KING, CHANTEL MCGREGOR, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Jan 31-Feb 2
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WEYFEST MARTIN TURNER, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES, NEONFLY, MORE

Tilford	Rural Life Museum	Aug 18-24
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WHITBY ROCKS FM, JACK J HUTCHINSON, THE HOT DAMN!, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 8
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WHITBY BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL DOM MARTIN, BLUE NATION, CONNOR SELBY, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 9, 10
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WIDE AWAKE KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD, MORE

London	Brockwell Park	May 25
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SWEET



DECEMBER 2024 - FULL CIRCLE PART II

FRIDAY 13 : WOLVERHAMPTON KK'S STEELMILL

SATURDAY 14 : LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY

SUNDAY 15 : HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME

WEDNESDAY 18 : FROME CHEESE & GRAIN

THURSDAY 19 : NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY

FRIDAY 20 : NORWICH WATERFRONT

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THU-17-OCT CARDIFF GLOBE

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SAT-19-OCT LEEDS BRUDENELL

SUN-20-OCT GLASGOW ORAN-MON

TUE-22-OCT NEWCASTLE CLONY

WED-23-OCT SHEFFIELD CORPORATION

THU-24-OCT NORWICH WATERFRONT STUDIO

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SAT-26-OCT NEWBURY ARLINGTON ARTS

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MAY 19 MANCHESTER NIGHT & DAY

MAY 24 CARDIFF CLWB IFOR BACH

MAY 25 BOURNMOUTH BEAR CAVE

MAY 31 LEICESTER O2 ACADEMY2

JUN 01 EDINBURGH BANNERMANS

JUN 02 LEEDS BRUDENELL

PLANET ROCK & THE GIG CARTEL
PRESENTS

KING KING



2024 TOUR

JUL 27 HOLMFIRTH

OCT 10 KENDAL

OCT 11 CHESTER

OCT 12 SOUTHAMPTON

OCT 14 BRIGHTON

OCT 15 GLOUCESTER

OCT 16 BATH

OCT 18 STOCKTON

OCT 19 LEEDS

OCT 20 CARLISLE

OCT 23 GATESHEAD

OCT 24 LINCOLN

OCT 25 NORWICH

OCT 27 READING

OCT 28 CARDIFF

OCT 29 SOUTHPORT

DEC 14 GLASGOW - QMU

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HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME

THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY 20 SEPTEMBER

CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION

SATURDAY 21 SEPTEMBER



The Who

London Royal Albert Hall

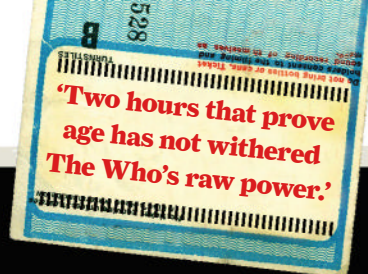
A week of charity shows gets a heavyweight opening night.

★ This year is the final year that Roger Daltrey will curate the annual Teenage Cancer Trust concerts at the Albert Hall, having helped raise £32 million for the charity over 24 years. And by the sound of the first of two opening nights of the week by The Who, he plans to take the building down with him.

As a full orchestra blazes into an opening segment consisting largely of the highlights from *Tommy*, already brazenly bombastic pieces like *Overture*, *Amazing Journey* and *We're Not Gonna Take It* become monumental sonic edifices, while *Pinball Wizard* gets flipped through the back wall by power-chord horns.

Echoing their recent *The Who Hits Back!* tour, the show then gives way to a band-only hits segment, with *The Kids Are Alright*, *My Generation* and *Substitute* sounding impossibly lean and nimble 50 years on. On stage the surviving Who might bicker like snug-bar pensioners – Daltrey unable to see his set-list, Townshend having a problem with his “hearing aids”. But when *Won't Get Fooled Again* hits a howling climax still worthy of '72, they feel thoroughly undimmed and undiminished, even in their sixtieth year together. As the orchestra returns to light up a closing chunk of largely *Quadrophenia* songs – a rattling *5:15*, a showstopping *Love, Reign O'er Me* – these are two phenomenal hours that prove age clearly has not withered The Who's raw power.

Mark Beaumont



Roger Daltrey: bowing out of his Teenage Cancer Trust curator role with a bang.

Rick Wakeman

London Theatre Royal

Capes! Keytars! Concept pieces! Rick plays a royal blinder.

★ With a sparkly-caped Wakeman flanked by his trusty decks of synths – and son Adam on supplementary keyboards and acoustic guitar – a bouncy *Roundabout* is a cracking start to tonight's show, with vocalist Mollie Marriott giving some R&B shimmy to the song. Her vocal edges into musical theatre, which is useful for the numbers in the second half of the set – a punchy rendition of *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, and the slightly syrupy *The Meeting*, which is augmented by an impressive trio of semi-operatic backing vocalists.

It's nice to sway along to *Wondrous Stories* and to fall into, and out of, dinosaur-concealing volcanoes, but what we really want is *South Side Of The Sky's* transportive prog grooves and towering encore *Starship Trooper*. Here's where young drummer Adam Faulkner dishes out his best Alan White rock chops, and the whole band are having a terrific time; a joyful Lee Pomeroy delivering some Chris Squire-esque Rickenbacker pluck, Rock Ensemble mainstay Dave Colquhoun darting from chiming 12-string to six-string guitar for some electric oomph, Marriott projecting with soulful welly.

Could this be topped? Perhaps if father and son had a keytar widdle-off, front of stage. On cue, the pair move into position, grinning from ear-to-ear – and era to era. The audience is grinning too.

Jo Kendall

Echo And The Bunnymen

London The Roundhouse

Singer's tantrums throw a spanner in a greatest-hits show.

★ Frontman Ian McCulloch is having a go at ancient Greek philosopher Plato. And at Ray Winstone's gambling ads. And even at the audience's lack of appreciation for “humour, wit and intellect”. In the sold-out audience's defence, they possibly can't understand what he's saying, his scouse rumble so low it's subterranean. Or maybe they're not keen on his long digressions between songs, which, on top of a 20-minute interval, kill the gig's momentum. The Bunnymen have been one of Britain's most brilliant, mercurial live bands for over four decades, but they do have off nights. And tonight, sadly, is one of them.

The Songs To Learn And Sing Tour should be an easy win, with McCulloch, Will Sergeant (positioned miles away) and their deferential band – shrouded in much dry ice – cruising through career highs: the barbed post-punk of *Rescue* and *Over The Wall*, the symphonic sultriness of *The Killing Moon* and *The Cutter*. But the sound is scratchy, and McCulloch's grumpy mood is infectious. “You like dancing?” he asks before the avant-disco of *Never Stop*. “I don't, I fucking hate it.” Things are allowed to flow during *Bring On The Dancing Horses* and *Seven Seas*, but an encore of *Lips Like Sugar* is somehow both perfunctory and pointlessly elongated for further Mac rants.

The Bunnymen have been revitalised in recent years, but this was a gig to forget.

Chris Roberts

Simple Minds / Del Amitri

Dublin 3Arena

Glittering Prizes.

★ Whether you prefer the weird Euro disco of their early years or the singalong shapes of their stadium-rocking, unit-shifting period, the resurgent Simple Minds have got you covered. Enjoying their arena renaissance immensely, tonight they deliver to an adoring audience both the icy grandeur of 1979's *Premonition* and the hands-in-the-air ‘la la’s of *Don't You (Forget About Me)* and make it difficult to spot the join.

A charming Jim Kerr jokes about both his advancing years and his tax-exile Irish stay during the glory days, as this superb band – full marks to the industrial Bernard Edwards bass of Ged Grimes, the ferocious kit pummelling of Cherisse Osei (and her drum solo you didn't go to the bar for), and the echoing chime and charm of Charlie Burchill's guitar – take us through several exceptional songs from their *New Gold Dream* masterwork, and even manage to make *Belfast Child* sound good.

While the pace slackens on the more recent material, they easily make up for it with a tremendous *Love Song*, a ceiling-scraping *Once Upon A Time*, and a one-two encore knockout of *Alive And Kicking* and a righteous *Sanctify Yourself* that sends everyone home smiling. Marvellous.

Hats off too to Del Amitri, who play an enjoyably rockin' support slot and deserve a mention for *Kiss This Thing Goodbye* alone. A capital night out.

Pat Carty

Pixies

London Kentish Town Forum

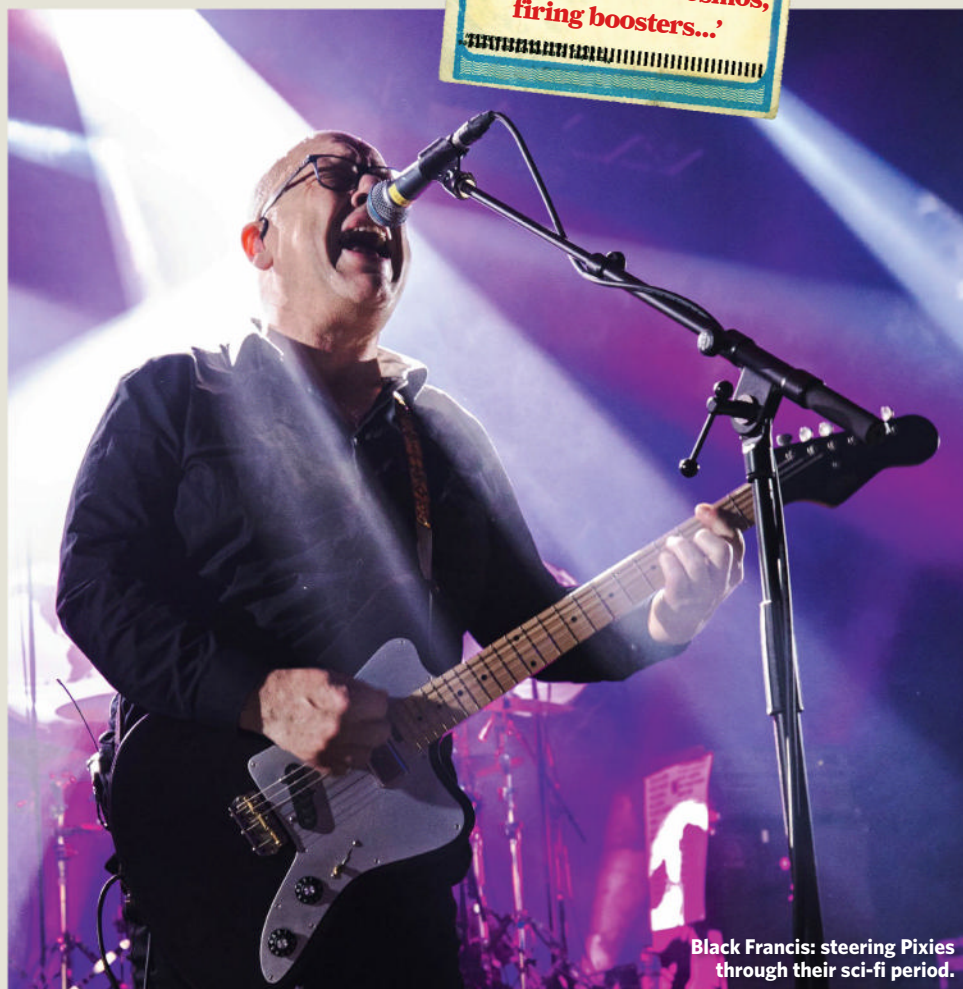
After *Surfer Rosa*/*Come On Pilgrim* and *Doolittle* in-full tours, it's *Bossanova*'s turn.

★ "Tonight's story begins in 1893..."

Breaking Pixies' long-standing 'no bants' rule, Black Francis takes the Forum back to the heyday of French composer Gabriel Fauré in order to trace the classical roots of the fake 1960s surf song *Cecilia Ann* that opened the band's 1990 third album *Bossanova*. It was the first of two Los Angeles-born Pixies albums, along with 1991's more blackly metallic *Trompe Le Monde*. "And," Francis explains, "we're going to play both of those records tonight."

This is Pixies' (lesser-played) sci-fi period: *Bossanova* coasts off into the alt.rock cosmos, firing boosters such as *Veloria*, *Stormy Weather* and *Dig For Fire* for bursts of melodic warp-speed, while *Trompe Le Monde* comes across more like *Mars Attacks!*. The compulsive pop title track gives way to an unusually seductive version of *Planet Of Sound*, while their Jesus And Mary Chain cover *Head On*, ray-gun country tune *Letter To Memphis* and a celestial *Bird Dream Of The Olympus Mons* prove the record to be a thriving stellar system of Pixies deep cuts. Deepest of all, Francis claims, is the magnificent *Motorway To Roswell*, in which an alien visitor crashes – thematically – in New Mexico. Triple-knuckled fingers crossed that such interstellar wonders stay in Pixies' set-list's orbit.

Mark Beaumont



Black Francis: steering Pixies through their sci-fi period.

Liam Gallagher John Squire

London The Troxy

Close, but no cigar.

★ For a certain demographic, the pairing of former Oasis frontman Liam Gallagher with ex-Stone Roses guitarist John Squire is the stuff of fantasy, a dream combination of Manc royalty that can only reap rich rewards. And judging by the form book it's hard to disagree, their musical compatibility (a shared taste for psych-laced, 60s-based, 70s-styled rock'n'roll swagger) and Liam's long-held fan-boy admiration for the Roses bodes well. Both can barb a hook, and their self-titled debut album matches knockout Gallagher punches with lashings of Ali-shuffling fancy-fretboard footwork from Squire. What could possibly go wrong?

Essentially, nothing does. They stroll on, all parkas and attitude, play their album in full, and mooch off after 45 minutes with ears full of adulation, before returning with a creditable reading of the Rolling Stones' *Jumpin' Jack Flash* that sends their shell-shocked audience into the night a good 45 minutes earlier than they expected. There's nothing from either protagonist's back catalogue, no extemporisation, it is what it is. No more, no less. Liam's in awe of the band, but despite the seasoned sessioners hitting all the right notes there's no essential spark, no collective groove, everything but Liam's strident combat-sport vocal seems tentative. They rock, yeah, but it'll take a few more gigs before they truly roll.

Ian Fortnam

The Gaslight Anthem

Glasgow O2 Academy

Rabble-rousing heartland rockers return in style.

★ Let's get the obvious point out of the way first: The Gaslight Anthem are indebted to the music of their fellow New Jerseyite and occasional collaborator Bruce Springsteen. And that's fine, they've learned from the best.

During this rapturously received opening night of their current UK tour, they charge through 22 of their Boss-adjacent anthems in 90 hot minutes. Clearly they are a band with something to prove, having returned from a nine-year sabbatical. They sound energised, muscular, still the same old rock'n'roll romantics their fans fell in love with in the first place. Granted, with the honourable exception of raw-throated frontman Brian Fallon, they'll never be mistaken for showmen; they're heads-down pros who let the fairly charismatic Fallon do all the heavy lifting in that department. His stage banter includes an amusing rant about his fondness for 80s Rod Stewart. "And yeah, I know he's not really from here, it's weird." Cue big laugh from the audience.

Musical highlights included a mid-set cameo from support act Emily Wolf, who duets with Fallon on country-ish weepers *Blue Jeans & White T-Shirts* and *The Weatherman*, and triumphant singalong versions of fan favourites *45* and *The '59 Sound*.

The Gaslight Anthem are back in the heartland, where they belong.

Paul Whitelaw

WITCH

New Plymouth Bowl Of Brooklands, New Zealand

Zamrock pioneers entertain the wildlife.

★ The Southern-most franchise of Peter Gabriel's WOMAD festival promises everything from Irish folk to a "tree-house troubadour" from Vanuatu, but there's plenty to keep rock fans entertained, from riotous Bosnian ska-punkers Dubioza Kolektiv to Son Rompe Pera, a Mexican troupe who play the marimba as if it's the most anarchic instrument of them all.

Heading the pack are WITCH (We Intend To Cause Havoc), the biggest Zambian rock band of the 70s, who re-formed a few years back after reissue label Now Again compiled a box set of their early LPs. Only frontman Emanyao 'Jagari' Chanda remains from the original line-up, but his on-stage patter is apparently undiminished by the passing of time. "Small piece of advice," he says, a wry smile on his face. "If someone does you wrong, do not rush to punch them in the face."

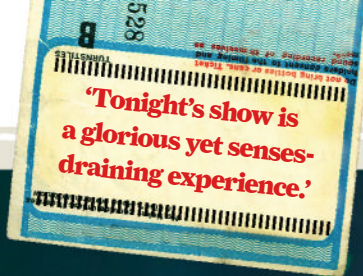
Old songs *Living In The Past* and *Mashed Potato* are both cut from the same lightly psychedelic cloth, somewhere in the region of Iron Butterfly, while *Waile*, the more recent, ramps up the African rhythms and gives the backing singers (foot-high Afros, Day-Glo costumes) the chance to bounce and boogie.

Marijuana smoke drifts across the lake in front of the stage, followed, rather delightfully, by a pair of swooping Canada geese...

Fraser Lewry



LIVE!



Saxon deliver the goods at their first ever Wembley show.



Judas Priest/Saxon/Uriah Heep

London Wembley Arena

Three of the great enduring British hard rock/heavy metal bands come together to deliver a show of real strength.

★ We are often reminded that patience is a virtue, and tonight Judas Priest roll into London for the first time in almost a decade, following the pandemic and an ill-fated Special Guest spot with Ozzy Osbourne that was postponed multiple times. With tonight's headliners' critically praised latest album *Invincible Shield* having leapt into the UK chart at No.2 - their highest ever placing - and having not one but two iconic bands as an under-card, there's an unmistakable feeling that despite being seated (well, seats are *there*) this evening's lucky 12,500 punters are going to be part of something very special indeed.

Uriah Heep kick things off at the ludicrously early time of 6.40pm and are allotted just 35 minutes on stage. C'mon, man, if the show is gonna be an early starter then why not pull things forward by another 10 minutes and allow these elder statesmen the dignity of playing for three quarters of an hour?

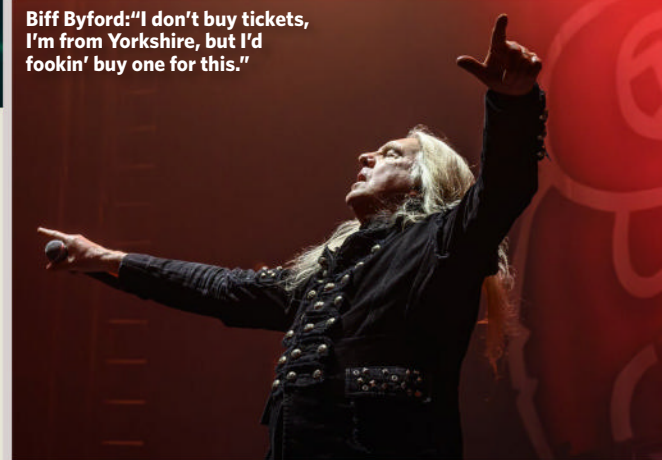
It's Uriah Heep's first time playing here since 1976, when the place was called the Empire Pool and the band's singer David Byron was about to be booted into touch during a campaign for the album *High And Mighty*. Cast in the image of guitarist Mick Box, a man who probably smiles even during a visit to the dentist, Heep is a happier ship these days, and defying the time limitations they crowbar two songs

(opener *Save Me Tonight* and *Hurricane*) from last year's current album *Chaos & Colour*, and one (*Grazed By Heaven*) from its 2018 predecessor *Living The Dream* into the set-list. Heep are far from alone in emphasising the new, and across tonight's triple-pronged performance 11 of the 37 songs played, more than a quarter were recorded in the current millennium. So much for this genre being a museum.

The rare inclusion of *Free 'N' Easy*, a bulldozer introduced by Heep's chirpy Canadian singer Bernie Shaw as "three minutes of what heavy metal sounded like back in the early seventies", sees them compete on an even footing with the two bands that will follow them, although what Heep can do that the others cannot is summon the light and shade of an organist to add colour, as on *Rainbow Demon* and *Gypsy*. Sure enough, they end with *Easy Livin'* and an outro of *Land Of Hope And Glory*, with the Wembley audience on their feet.

Saxon take the stage to *The Prophecy*, a spoken-word intro by none other than actor Brian Blessed. It precedes the arrival of another foghorn-voiced Yorkshireman, Biff Byford, who reveals that Saxon have never played Wembley before. They were supposed to have done so back in 1980, until Ritchie

Biff Byford: "I don't buy tickets, I'm from Yorkshire, but I'd fookin' buy one for this."



Blackmore threw them off a tour with his band Rainbow. "We're fookin' here now, though," Byford states, grinning mischievously.

Guitarist Brian Tatler is proving an able replacement for co-founder Paul Quinn, who stepped back from touring last year but makes guest appearances when he feels like it. Surprisingly, Quinny doesn't turn up at Wembley.

Saxon mix NWOBHM standards such as *Motorcycle Man*, *The Power & The Glory*, and *The Bands Played On* and *Heavy Metal Thunder* with newer songs such as *Hell*, *Fire And Damnation*, *There's Something In Roswell* and *Madame Guillotine*, with no hint of frustration from the audience. Like Heep, Saxon simply have too many great songs to be condensed into a support set, so Byford offers a choice: we can hear *Crusader*, *Dallas 1pm* or *Strong Arm Of The Law*? The second, their ode to the assassination of US president John F Kennedy in 1963, complete with sampled gunshots, receives the loudest roar of approval.



Judas Priest's Richie Faulkner and Rob Halford, along with (left) guitarist Andy Sneap and drummer Scott Travis, deliver magnificent performances.



Mick Box and Bernie Shaw pack plenty of punches into Uriah Heep's ludicrously short 35-minute set.

"I don't buy tickets, I'm from Yorkshire, but I'd fookin' buy one for this," Byford remarks after his band have cranked through 747 (*Strangers In The Night*).

Denim And Leather, *Wheels Of Steel* and *Princess Of The Night* conclude Saxon's set, which includes Byford telling us – in an awful attempt at a cockney accent: "We'll probably see you dahn the 'Ammersmith next year."

What an opening one-two-three punch Judas Priest throw with *Panic Attack*, the first single from

Invincible Shield, followed by *You Got Another Thing Coming* and *Breaking The Law*, the latter introduced by Rob Halford teasing us: "Breaking the what?!"

With his multiple changes of outfit and quirky bunny-hops across the stage, the shaven-headed and bushy-bearded rainbow warrior makes the most unlikely of heavy metal heroes, but over the course of 105 pulsating minutes he sings way

better than any seventy-two-year-old has a right to.

It helps that he's backed by a wonderfully professional band. Guitarist Richie Faulkner plays magnificently, as does producer-turned-live guitarist Andy Sneap. Drummer Scott Travis even introduces the mighty *Painkiller*. From our seats high stage-left we barely see Ian Hill until he strides to the front of the stage to accept plaudits as the band depart; the rest of the time the bassist simply finds his spot and stands there for the duration, headbanging.

Sinner, a song you could play a visiting alien to define heavy metal, is rotated into tonight's set over its tour alternative *Beyond The Realms Of Death* (personally, I'd have preferred to hear the latter).

A thunderous *Hellion/Electric Eye* begins the encore, and engulfed in a plume of smoke Halford 'rides' his motorbike to the centre of the stage during *Hell Bent For Leather*. Then the ailing Glenn Tipton walks on from the wings to play guitar in *Metal Gods* and *Living After Midnight*.

Tonight's show, with three of the great British hard rock/heavy metal bands, is a glorious yet senses-draining experience, and once it's over one can only wonder whether we are likely to see it again. Three or four years down the line, into the circuit of what would be a twentieth studio record, Halford would be in his mid-70s, and these are extremely difficult songs to sing. But his final words are to tell us that "the Priest will be back", and we hope that against the odds there is still at least one more chapter to be written in this amazing story.

Dave Ling

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SAT 12 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
MON 14 STOKE REGENT THEATRE
TUE 15 NORTHAMPTON DERNGATE
SOLD OUT IPSWICH REGENT
SOLD OUT SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION
SAT 19 PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
MON 21 EASTBOURNE CONGRESS THEATRE
TUE 22 GUILDFORD & LIVE
THU 24 SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
FRI 25 ABERDEEN MUSIC HALL
SAT 26 DUNDEE CAIRD HALL
MON 28 MILTON KEYNES THEATRE
TUE 29 BLACKBURN KING GEORGES HALL
THU 31 BRADFORD ST GEORGES HALL

NOVEMBER 2024

FRI 01 HARROGATE CONVENTION CENTRE
SAT 02 HULL CONNEXIN LIVE
MON 04 LIVERPOOL EMPIRE THEATRE
TUE 06 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
THU 07 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
FRI 08 CARDIFF UTILITA ARENA
SAT 09 SWANSEA ARENA
MON 11 BRISTOL BEACON
TUE 12 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
THU 14 BRIGHTON CENTRE
FRI 15 BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
SAT 16 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO
MON 18 LLANDUDNO VENUE CYMRU THEATRE
TUE 19 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
THU 21 NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL
FRI 22 GLASGOW OVO HYDRO
SOLD OUT EDINBURGH USHER HALL
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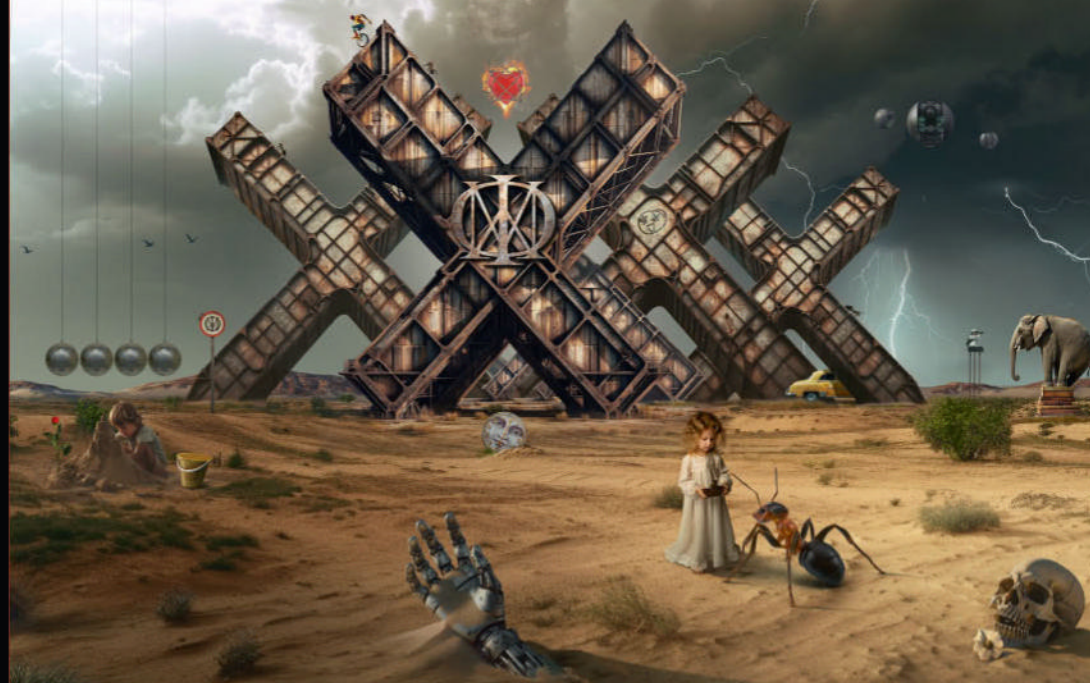
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A SJM CONCERTS PRESENTATION

Slash feat Myles Kennedy & The Conspirators / Mammoth WVH

London Wembley Arena

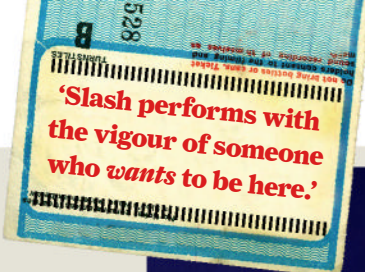
Slash and burn.

★ Now with two filler-free albums, Wolfgang Van Halen is an all-singing, all-shredding Swiss Army knife of a frontman who, as tonight proves, can also command an arena. Flanked by a band that feels like a gang (special props to pogoing bassist Ronnie Ficarro, who rarely looks anything short of thrilled) the Mammoth leader exudes a quiet but clear confidence, not trying to be anyone but himself.

Belatedly touring their 2022 album *4*, Slash and co. have a juicier catalogue than one might expect from, ostensibly, 'a side project'. Myles Kennedy occupies his usual niche between rock star and affable fanboy, but bassist Todd Kerns is something of a revelation, revving up Wembley like it's his birthday and singing lead on Lenny Kravitz's *Always On The Run*, plus the night's sole GN'R cover, *Don't Damn Me*.

At 58 and rock's most enduringly recognisable figure, Slash performs with the vigour of someone who *wants to be here*, leaping off risers and soloing with the gusto of an energetic teenager holding his first Les Paul. For the encore he plays pedal steel for a *Rocket Man* cover – a genuine surprise when he could've easily leaned on the huge and familiar. Isn't that what we want, and rarely get, from our most ubiquitous stars?

Polly Glass



Myles Kennedy: both rock star and fanboy.



Wolfgang Van Halen.



Slash.

'Ovation'

London Royal Albert Hall

Stars turn out for annual charity show.

★ Throwing an 80th birthday party for himself as he steps down after 24 years hosting these annual Teenage Cancer Trust charity shows, Roger Daltrey radiates genial, grandfatherly bonhomie. With old mates including Robert Plant, Paul Weller and Eddie Vedder, this grey-haired gathering feels unnervingly like a *Last Of The Summer Wine* stage musical at times. Even so, there are magic moments.

Weller opens festivities with a jazzy big-band set that features the Jam classic *That's Entertainment* and a Daltrey duet on The Who's *So Sad About Us*. Stereophonics' Kelly Jones also proves surprisingly funny and engaging, punctuating his soaring pop-rock anthems with jokey memories about Weller helping him choose his wedding suit. Only Vedder dampens the celebratory mood, with a self-indulgent interlude of guitar-strumming bar-stool introspection.

Robert Plant's current rootsy project Saving Grace bring a whiff of alchemy with their country-folk Americana, gorgeously intertwined vocal harmonies and antique gems, including a mandolin-twanging take on Led Zeppelin's *Friends*. Daltrey's headline set is an uneven hotch-potch of covers, solo singles and indifferent bluesy jams, but it ends with an agreeably sloppy all-star sing-along version of *Baba O'Riley*.

The Who frontman can be boorish and charmless, but he's been a fine figurehead for Teenage Cancer Trust, and this show fades away like a fond farewell.

Stephen Dalton

The Jesus And Mary Chain

London The Roundhouse

Ruby anniversary is almost gold.

★ Even after all this time, the Jesus And Mary Chain – specifically brothers Jim and William Reid – still display the awkwardness of a first date that will be the only date. Although their stage craft remains minimal, they not only venture forward with new material that sits comfortably with their established gems, but also add electronics and sequencers that give extra squelch and bounce to the bottom end, most notably in a ferocious *Reverence*.

Malevolent opener *Jamcod* embraces the new aesthetic, and their digging of nuggets from new album *Glasgow Eyes* is to be applauded. *Girl71* unashamedly slips Judas Priest's *Living After Midnight* a cheeky disco biscuit, while *Chemical Animal* drips with psychedelic menace.

Strangely, it's the older material that threatens to derail them: both *April Skies* and *Far Gone And Out* are restarted after fluffed intros, while *Blues From A Gun* is almost unrecognisable with Justin Welch's drums way too high in the mix. Still, the perfect buzz-saw pop of *Taste Of Cindy* and *In A Hole*'s motorik onslaught summon the fury of old, and the appearance of Jane Weaver for *Just Like Honey* and *Sometime Always* sweetens their bitter pill.

A little too stiff to count as a vintage performance, there are still enough 'yeah yeah yeah's, 'whoah whoah-whoah's and 'hey-hey-hey's to rekindle the affections again.

Julian Marszalek

DeWolff / Silveroller

Hastings The Carlisle

Retro-rockers turn back the clock on dream double bill.

★ Outside it may be a gloomy Friday night in March 2024, but the moment Silveroller step on stage at The Carlisle we're transported back to a Technicolor version of 1971.

Opener *Black Crow* sets out their impressive stall, with polished nods to The Faces (*Turn To Gold*), Zeppelin (*Ways Of Seeing*) and Free (*Come In Come On*) delivered at full tilt, singer Jonnie Hodson's vocals a Paul Rodgers-esque thing of wonder. "Welcome to the party!" he says, ruffling his Rod-like barnet prior to scorching closer *Hold On*. Far bigger stages await.

For anyone other than DeWolff it would be a tough act to follow. But jump-suited brothers Pablo and Luka van de Poel (guitar and drums respectively) give the impression they were jamming in the cradle, and, stripped back to a three-piece for this first UK tour, they place the emphasis firmly on their jaw-dropping musical dexterity. Blistering opener *Night Train* serves notice of the fretboard wizardry to come, Pablo firing off Angus-style solos even while wandering through the audience, while a Santana-tinged *Will O' The Wisp* allows keyboard player Robin Piso to lead the band deep into proggy waters. "We're gonna play two more numbers... but it's gonna feel like ten!" says a grinning Pablo, before a pulverising encore of *Nothing's Changing* and *Freeway Flight* brings the house down. They'll be talking about this one for years.

Paul Moody



The Soundtrack Of My Life

Bluesman
Walter Trout

on the records,
artists and gigs
that are of lasting
significance
to him.

Interview: **Bill DeMain**



“To this day, Mike Bloomfield remains the guy who made me want to do what I do.”

“I was really lucky that I heard so much great music growing up,” says Walter Trout. Over a fifty-plus year solo career, including shifts with Canned Heat, John Lee Hooker and Big Mama Thornton, Trout has let everything from blues to rock to jazz flow through his writing and virtuoso playing. His latest album, *Broken*, with guest appearances from Beth Hart and Dee Snider, is a soulful, 12-song enquiry into our fractured world, with all the blistering guitar breaks fans have come to expect from Trout. About to turn 73, and on the eve of a world tour, he says: “I’ve been through it. I’ve been a heroin addict and an alcoholic and everything else. But now I want to savour every moment that I’m here. And music lets me do that.”

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

My parents loved big-band and swing. In the mid-fifties, when I was a kid, they used to take me to black jazz clubs in Atlantic City. And I wanted to be a jazz trumpet player like Miles Davis or Clark Terry. When I was ten I got to spend the day hanging out with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra! All that music sunk in.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

In Collingswood, New Jersey, a guy opened a record shop, and for opening day he had me and my eighth-grade buddies come in and try to play some blues. I was paid with a Dean Martin album and a Frank Sinatra album.

THE SINGER

When I was five, I saw a movie called *The Jolson Story*, with Larry Parks portraying Al Jolson. What I remember is the beauty of performance, and how it could affect an audience; how a man could just sing a song and be filled with joy. That had a big impact on me. Later it was Ray Charles.

THE SONGWRITER

Bob Dylan. *A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall*, *Masters Of War*, *Blowin’ In The Wind*. Those are astounding songs. He’s still writing astounding songs. There’s a reason he won the Nobel [Prize In Literature in 2016]. At the same time, on a very different track, I love Anthony Newley – *What Kind of Fool Am I?* and *Who Can I Turn To?* As someone who had a rough childhood, I related to those songs. It felt like Newley really got who I was.

THE GUITAR HERO

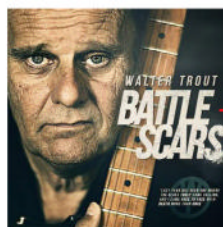
In 1965 I heard the *Paul Butterfield Blues Band* album, featuring Michael Bloomfield. I liked George Harrison and Keith Richards, but Bloomfield was on another planet, playing blazing blues licks with this rock’n’roll fire and aggression. Just astounding. To this day, he remains the guy who made me want to do what I do.

THE CULT HERO

Just out of high school, I got into a band with a guitarist named Craig Farley. One of the greatest players I’ve ever heard in my life. To this day, he did things on the guitar I’ve never heard anybody do. Then one day he said: “Hey, I just discovered something called Scientology.” He stopped playing and disappeared. I never heard from him again.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

The one that really made me want to play the guitar and not be a jazz trumpet player was *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*. I was eleven, and my brother came home with that record. I can’t even describe the impact it had on me. These simple songs with three chords had so much depth and substance, and so much to say. It completely changed my whole view of what music could be.



THE BEST LIVE ALBUM

Goodbye by Cream, which was half studio tracks, half live. It blew my mind. My friends and I went through hours and hours and many bags of weed blasting that record, while we lay on the living room floor with the lights out, in awe. I still marvel at Clapton’s guitar playing on that.

THE BEST RECORD I MADE

Battle Scars. I’d had a liver transplant, and was in the hospital for eight months. I had brain damage. I had to re-learn how to speak, re-learn how to use my legs. And then I had to spend a year to re-learn how to play the guitar. My wife and kids said: “We’re so happy you’re home, but you’ve been through a severe trauma, and you’re not a nice guy to be around.” My wife said: “Try writing some songs, just as therapy.” I went into the back room, and in two days wrote eighteen songs about what I’d been through. I just poured everything into that album.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Burt Bacharach and Hal David’s *Alfie*. It just destroys me. [Sings] ‘*Something even non-believers can believe in... I get choked up thinking of it. If I could sum up my view of life in a song, it would be *Alfie*. That’s a song that will last forever.*

MY SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY SONG

I’m home in California right now, and two of our sons are here visiting from Denmark. Last Saturday, we were running around the house, singing, and jumping around to *Take On Me* by A-ha and *Space Age Love Song* by A Flock of Seagulls. Blues purists would say: “What are you doing?” But I don’t care [laughs].

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

Instead of something sad, let’s have *Good Golly Miss Molly* by Little Richard, the greatest rock’n’roll singer of all time. Let’s have some joy and some life and some energy. 🎸

Broken is out now via Provogue/Mascot Label Group. Walter Trout tours the UK in October.



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